

Inspection of Ghyllside Primary School

Gillinggate, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 4JB

Inspection dates:	15 and 16 July 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Huw Davies. The school is part of the Ghyllside School Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is a single-academy trust overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Diane Horner.

What is it like to attend this school?

Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and nurturing at this school. Pupils are confident that they are valued by staff and are listened to. Pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. They get along well together and develop positive friendships.

The school is ambitious for its pupils. It has made recent, substantial changes to the design of its curriculum to reflect its high expectations. Published outcomes in 2024 show that pupils typically achieve well at the end of key stage 2 in English and mathematics. However, this strength is not reflected across other areas of the curriculum where its delivery is not as effective. This means there is variability in how well pupils learn, and they have gaps in their knowledge.

The school broadens pupils' experiences. Pupils take part in annual residential trips, starting in Year 3. These include camping, hill walking and visits to cities. Pupils also participate in many outdoor experiences, including the expedition club, and activities such as pond dipping. They cherish these opportunities.

The school develops pupils' talents and interests. Pupils learn to play sports and musical instruments. They perform at external events. Pupils enjoy attending a range of extra-curricular clubs. These include knitting, gardening, lacrosse, and comic club.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has introduced a new curriculum in almost all subjects. It is broad and ambitious. The school has identified the knowledge pupils should learn from the Nursery class to Year 6. It has set out the order in which this should be taught so that pupils' learning builds securely.

In the early years, the curriculum is delivered consistently. However, across key stages 1 and 2, there is variability in how effectively staff deliver the new curriculum. For example, some learning activities do not focus sharply enough on the key knowledge pupils should know. Furthermore, at times, teachers introduce a lot of new information in quick succession. This has an impact on how securely pupils learn within a lesson and over time.

The school prioritises reading. Starting from the Nursery class, children read often and enjoy hearing staff read to them. The school has an embedded phonics programme that staff deliver well. Staff are quick to spot if pupils are struggling to keep up. They help these pupils through prompt and effective support. Pupils quickly become confident, fluent readers.

Processes for checking how well pupils understand and remember the curriculum are still being developed. Staff do not consistently identify when pupils need further explanation or are ready to move on. They do not adapt the delivery of the curriculum to address pupils' misconceptions. This means pupils have gaps in their knowledge and complete

activities that are not well matched to their next steps. Conversely, in the early years, checks on children's learning are used effectively to inform teaching.

The school works in partnership with parents and carers and other professionals to identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/ or disabilities (SEND). It provides resources and personalised support to help these pupils access the curriculum. However, there is variability in the effectiveness of this support. This is because the school does not guide staff in identifying pupils' next steps precisely. It does not ensure there is clarity about how pupils will achieve these goals. Consequently, some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils live up to the school's expectations for their behaviour. They enjoy school, which is reflected in the school's high rates of attendance. If pupils' attendance becomes a concern, the school takes effective action to improve this.

The support for pupils' broader development is a strength. Pupils broaden their understanding of different beliefs. They meet religious leaders and visit places of worship such as a Buddhist temple. Pupils understand the impact that they can have on their school, the environment, and the wider community. For example, they raised money to develop the school's play area, and they read stories to residents of the local care home. Pupils wrote to their MP to highlight their concerns about pollution. They also held discussions with the mayor to deepen their understanding of democracy.

Leaders provide support to staff to help them understand the expectations of the school's curriculum. Trustees ensure that they have the necessary skills to carry out their role. They challenge the school about the actions it is taking to improve. However, leaders and trustees do not ensure that there are robust processes in place to check, with enough rigour, the quality of the school's education. This hinders them from ensuring weaknesses are swiftly addressed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is variability in the delivery of the curriculum. Consequently, pupils' learning does not build as securely as it should, and they struggle to recall learning in the longer term. The school should ensure that staff have the expertise to deliver the curriculum consistently well, so pupils receive a consistent quality of education across subjects.
- The school's assessment systems are in their infancy. Gaps in pupils' knowledge are not consistently identified and addressed in lessons and over time. This means that pupils' knowledge does not build as securely and deeply as it should. The school should develop its strategies to check pupils' learning so that they build a secure body of

knowledge across all subjects.

- The effectiveness of the school's support for pupils with SEND is variable. Staff have not had sufficient guidance to identify pupils' key next steps clearly or to adapt the delivery of the curriculum effectively to focus on these. This means that some pupils with SEND do not build on their knowledge consistently and do not achieve as well as they should. The school should ensure the agreed targets for pupils with SEND are clear and specific, and staff adapt teaching effectively, so these pupils consistently achieve well.
- Leaders and trustees do not ensure they have sufficient oversight of the curriculum. This means that variability in the delivery and impact of the curriculum is not identified and acted on as swiftly as it could. The school should ensure there are robust checks in place to enable leaders to identify and address inconsistencies in the delivery and impact of the curriculum.

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	138744
Local authority	Westmorland and Furness
Inspection number	10378001
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	449
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Diane Horner
Headteacher	Huw Davies
Website	www.ghyllside.cumbria.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 March 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Ghyllside School Academy Trust, which is a single-academy trust overseen by a board of trustees.
- Leaders do not currently make use of any alternative provision.

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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued 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, trustees, and staff at the school. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, history, design, and technology. 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 familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils during breaktime and lunchtime and in lessons.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and carers and considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text comments. Inspectors spoke to pupils and to staff to gather their views.
- 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

Steven Rooney

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Ofsted Inspector

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