

Inspection of a good school: Ghyllside Primary School

Gillinggate, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 4JB

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 March 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.

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?

The school's vision is to ensure that pupils leave the school being happy, confident and kind to all. In this endeavour, the school flourishes. Pupils get along well together which means that fall outs are rare. They love attending school and those in Year 6 were sad to soon be leaving. There is a tangible sense of care and fondness for each other. This was best summed up by pupils who said that 'we have each other's back here'. This exemplifies how safe and well cared for pupils feel by their classmates as well as by staff.

Pupils' school experiences are enriched through a range of opportunities. They access a breadth of extra-curricular clubs and activities such as sports clubs, expedition club and eco-club. They learn musical instruments such as the violin. They proudly participate in different inter-school competitions. Pupils enjoy several different residential visits and a variety of trips which link to the topics that they study.

The school is ambitious for what pupils will learn. This includes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In subjects such as English and mathematics, pupils typically achieve well by the time that they leave the school. However, in some other subjects, the school is less clear on how pupils will build their knowledge coherently over time. In these subjects, pupils' knowledge is sometimes uneven.

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

The school has implemented a broad curriculum. It has outlined its overarching expectations for what pupils should learn by the end of each academic year. In some subjects, the school has precisely broken down these expectations into well-organised, small steps of knowledge that build logically over time. In such subjects, curriculum content is delivered effectively, and pupils generally acquire a rich body of knowledge.

In other subjects, and in the early years, curriculums are underdeveloped. In these subjects, the school lacks clarity about what knowledge it expects teachers to teach and at what point. This sometimes results in pupils learning through a disconnected series of activities that do not help them to build their knowledge in a coherent manner.

The school's checks on what pupils have learned and remembered are of variable quality. In some subjects, the school uses assessment strategies effectively to identify what pupils might be struggling with. This often leads to pupils receiving appropriate support to address their misconceptions. However, in other subjects, the school's checks on learning are less precise. This sometimes means that the school does not identify where pupils have gaps or misconceptions in their learning.

There are strong systems in place for the early identification of pupils with SEND. The school works appropriately with external partners to seek specialist advice when it is needed.

Pupils develop a love of reading in this school. One such example of this which was seen during the inspection. Pupils excitedly read the books of a popular author while eagerly awaiting an upcoming visit by this person. In doing so, some pupils felt that they had unearthed their new favourite story.

The school has implemented a bespoke phonics programme that is delivered consistently well by staff. Children begin learning to read through this programme shortly after they start in the early years. They read books that match well to the sounds that they know. The school arranges additional opportunities for pupils to close any gaps in their knowledge of sounds. Many pupils become fluent, confident readers by the time that they leave Year 1.

The opportunities that the school provides for pupils' personal development is a strength of Ghyllside Primary. For example, pupils appreciate the unique chances that they have to video call with older students in a partner school to learn more about these students' varying cultures and beliefs. This enhances pupils' knowledge of modern Britain. It also builds a sense of respect for those from different backgrounds.

The school is taking appropriate steps to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Pupils have a positive attitude to their learning. They conduct themselves well throughout the school day and lessons are rarely disrupted.

The school takes appropriate measures to help staff to manage their workload. Staff appreciate being consulted about potential operational changes that may impact on them.

Trustees generally fulfil their roles effectively. However, they are not as well informed as they should be about the quality and impact of the school's curriculum on pupils' learning. This currently limits trustees' awareness of the curriculum work that is still required. It also means that they do not provide enough challenge and support to leaders about the quality of education on offer to pupils.

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, and in the early years, the school has not identified the small steps of knowledge that pupils should learn. Consequently, the school has not decided on the order and manner that this knowledge should be taught. This sometimes means that pupils do not build their knowledge in a coherent way. The school should finalise its curriculum thinking and provide staff with sufficient guidance on how to deliver new learning effectively.
- In some subjects, the school does not use assessment strategies effectively to establish what pupils know. This is partly because the school has not identified the specific knowledge that pupils need to learn in these subjects. The school is therefore not clear on the gaps or misconceptions that pupils might have. The school should ensure that effective assessment practices are in place in all subjects.
- Trustees do not robustly evaluate the quality of the curriculum and its impact on pupils' achievement. This means that trustees are not aware of the extent of the curriculum development work that is still required. Trustees should ensure that they improve their oversight of the quality of education so that they can provide well-informed strategic direction and hold leaders to account.

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 April 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	138744
Local authority	Westmorland and Furness
Inspection number	10294371
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	458
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Diane Horner
Headteacher	Huw Davies
Website	http://www.ghyllside.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new chair of the board of trustees has been appointed since the last inspection.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- A breakfast- and after-school club operate at the school. This is managed by an independent provider.

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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, religious education and mathematics. They met with subject leaders and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning. The lead inspector observed pupils read to a familiar adult.

- The inspectors also considered the curriculum, spoke with pupils about their learning and evaluated their work in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector spoke with a group of trustees. The inspectors also talked to staff about their workload and well-being.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The lead inspector met with the leaders who are responsible for attendance and behaviour.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils about their wider experience of school.
- The inspectors looked at a range of policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- 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 took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. There were no responses to the online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors made themselves available to parents at the start of the school day and took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

David Spruce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Keith Wright

Ofsted Inspector

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