

Inspection of a good school: Holm Cultram Abbey CofE School

Abbeytown, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 4RU

Inspection date: 31 January 2023

Outcome

Holm Cultram Abbey CofE School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They are respectful and kind and look after one another well.

Leaders and teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils know this, and most behave very sensibly. The few pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour receive the right support from staff. This means lessons are rarely disrupted. Leaders deal with bullying and name-calling effectively. This helps pupils feel safe and happy.

Pupils are welcoming and tolerant. A typical comment from pupils was: 'If you are different, you can still do everything others do in our school.'

Pupils participate in a range of interesting trips and visits, for example to museums and centres for outdoor learning. This helps them to build character and develop confidence.

Pupils know that teachers expect them to work hard. They take great pride in their written work, and it is neat and tidy. Leaders make sure that pupils who find learning difficult, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receive effective support. Pupils achieve well.

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

Leaders have revised the curriculum. They have ensured that it is ambitious and have organised it in a logical way to support pupils' learning in mixed-age classes. As a result of these changes, pupils are developing an increasingly secure body of subject knowledge.

From their first days in the Reception class, children develop their reading and number skills well. Teachers know what pupils need to learn at each stage in school. They check carefully that pupils are learning and remembering the curriculum content. Pupils become resilient learners and are well prepared to move on to the next stage in their education.

Leaders and teachers have ensured that reading has a high priority in the school. Children learn phonics from their first days in school. Staff in the Reception class and key stage 1 build pupils' phonics skills skilfully. They make sure that pupils read books that are well matched to their phonic knowledge. Teachers are swift to spot any pupils who may be falling behind. Staff help these pupils to catch up quickly. Once pupils are confident in phonics, they move on quickly to read and understand more complex texts. Teachers read to pupils every day. They also encourage pupils to read for pleasure from a wide range of high-quality texts.

In some subjects, staff have only recently put the revised curriculum into place, and it is already having a positive impact on pupils' learning. However, a few subject leaders are new to their roles. They have not had training in how to lead their subjects. This limits their ability to develop the curriculum further.

Leaders are determined that pupils with SEND will achieve just as well as their peers. Leaders and teachers accurately identify pupils with SEND at the earliest possible stage. They ensure that the right support is in place for these pupils to thrive. Leaders ensure that they are able to take part in all aspects of school life, including trips and visits. Visits such as to outdoor learning centres or activities such as horse riding enable pupils with SEND to develop their talents and interests beyond the academic curriculum. Consequently, pupils with SEND are confident in approaching the next phase in their education.

Pupils participate in events and competitions such as tag rugby and Bright Stars. They have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument and to go on residential visits. These opportunities help them to learn about the wider world and prepare them well for the future. They learn about different faiths and cultures. They understand the importance of developing respectful relationships with people who may be different from them. Older pupils help look after children in the Reception class at breaktimes and lunchtimes. This means that these children soon become part of the school family and learn the routines.

Pupils behave well and rarely disrupt learning. They enjoy lessons and want to do their best. They say that teachers are kind and fair, typically commenting that 'the best thing about school is the teachers'. Parents and carers say that staff are approachable and always willing to listen. They know that their children are well cared for.

Governors are well informed. They make careful checks on safeguarding procedures to assure themselves that the school continues to be safe. Governors and leaders take staff's workload, well-being and work-life balance into consideration when making decisions about the school. Staff feel valued and appreciated.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that pupils are safe in the school. Staff understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. They have regular and up-to-date training. They know precisely what to do and who to contact if they suspect that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders provide pupils and their families with the help that they need promptly.

The curriculum helps pupils to learn about how to manage risk. For example, they learn about how to be safe online. Pupils said that they know they are safe in school because staff are always watching out for them.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subject leaders are new to their role and have not received training to develop their skills in leadership. This means that they are not fully effective in monitoring teaching and bringing about further improvements to the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that all subject leaders receive the right support and training to enable them to be successful in their roles.

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 2013.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	112249
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10226204
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Phil Jackson
Headteacher	Andrea Worthington
Website	www.holmcultramabbey.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a voluntary-controlled Church of England school. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in November 2019.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During this inspection, the inspectors met with the headteacher, subject leaders and seven members of the governing body.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also looked at pupils' work in some other subjects.
- The inspectors observed pupils reading to a familiar adult and spoke to pupils

informally.

- The inspectors met with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of safeguarding documentation, including the single central record of checks on staff suitability to work with pupils. They met with the designated safeguarding lead and checked how leaders record and respond to safeguarding concerns.
- The inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. There were no responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Jan Corlett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Linda Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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