

Inspection of a good school: Fairfield Primary School

Gallowbarrow, Cockermouth, Cumbria CA13 0DX

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 September 2023

Outcome

Fairfield Primary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Chris Steele. This school is part of the Learning for Life Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Chris Steele, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Huw Morgan.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils demonstrate warmth and kindness towards each other. They enjoy respectful interactions with the adults at the school, who care for them well. Pupils are proud of their school.

Pupils benefit from the high aspirations that the trust and the school have for their achievement. Most pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well and are well prepared for each stage in their education. Children in the early years enjoy a vibrant learning environment.

Pupils are happy. They receive a high level of care and support at the school. As a result, pupils make a strong start to their time at the school.

Pupils enjoy an impressive range of opportunities in school that make a significant contribution to their wider development. A wealth of clubs helps them to further their talents and interests in the areas of sport, the arts and languages. The highly active school parliament listens and responds thoughtfully to fellow pupils. This has led to improvements to playground activities, school lunches and the organisation of whole-school reading events.

Pupils are enthused by the many trips available to them. These are closely linked to the curriculum that they study. Visits to the home of William Wordsworth and Castlerigg Stone Circle ensure that pupils develop an appreciation of local history.

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

The school has a clear and ambitious vision for the curriculum. The key information that pupils should learn is carefully designed so that they build their knowledge and understanding logically over time. In the early years, the activities that teachers design ensure that children are well prepared for the demands of Year 1.

The school ensures that teachers design activities that help most pupils, including pupils with SEND, to follow the curriculum well. Staff identify the needs of pupils with SEND accurately and promptly. They use this information effectively to ensure that these pupils learn well alongside their peers. The school works with a wide range of specialists, as necessary.

Teachers make regular checks on what pupils know and remember. In most subjects, they use this information well to address any gaps or misconceptions that pupils have about their learning.

The school has prioritised reading across the school. The books that pupils read are accurately matched to the sounds that they learn. Staff help most pupils to become confident and fluent readers. On occasion, for some pupils who are at the early stages of reading, staff do not address gaps in their phonics knowledge quickly enough. This means that some pupils move on to new learning before they are ready. As a result, they do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils read widely. The books that they read make a strong contribution to their understanding of the world. For example, they learn to value the differences that exist between people and the importance of friendship.

Most pupils are enthusiastic and attentive in lessons. Consequently, their learning is rarely interrupted. Teachers deal effectively with any rare incidents of low-level disruption that may occur. The school has highly effective systems in place to support the small number of pupils who sometimes need help to improve their behaviour.

Pupils know how to stay physically and mentally healthy. They learn about the importance of sleep and about how their body changes as they grow. They demonstrate respect for other cultures and faiths. Across the curriculum, the school has ensured that pupils learn about how to keep themselves and others safe from harm.

Parents and carers receive helpful guidance about how to support their child's education. This includes information about the school's approach to teaching phonics.

The trust has robust systems to check on the procedures and systems that are in place at the school. It carries out its statutory duties effectively. It considers staff workload when making decisions about the future of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, staff are too slow to address the gaps that some pupils at the early stages of reading have in their phonics knowledge. When this happens, these pupils move on to new learning before they are ready and they do not achieve as well as they should. The school should strengthen support for these pupils so that they become confident and fluent readers.

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 predecessor school, Fairfield Primary School, to be good in October 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	142196
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10291438
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	438
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Huw Morgan
CEO of the trust	Chris Steele
Headteacher	Chris Steele
Website	www.fairfieldprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 July 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Learning for Life Trust.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time inspection judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and leaders of SEND, behaviour, attendance and pupil welfare. He also met with representatives of the trust, including the school's link director and the chief executive officer.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, he held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons,

spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the single central record and took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils. He considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture of safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first. He also held a meeting with the designated safeguarding lead and the deputy safeguarding leads.
- The inspector held a meeting with the board of trustees and the local governing board, including the chair. He also spoke to a local authority general adviser.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. He took account of the responses from staff and pupils to Ofsted's online surveys and gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- The inspector spoke with pupils about their experiences of school life and their views on behaviour and bullying. He observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- The inspector spoke to staff about their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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