

Inspection of Ashfield Junior School

High Street, Workington, Cumbria CA14 4ES

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 July 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and proud to belong to this welcoming school. They told inspectors that staff are always willing to listen to them and help them, especially if they have any worries.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from the input of staff who understand them well. This is especially true for those who access 'Treetops', the school's specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision).

Pupils are well behaved. They show consideration to others at breaktimes and as they move around the site. Older pupils help younger pupils settle in quickly when they join the school.

Pupils are keen to make a positive contribution to their school and wider community. For example, the 'Global Goals' group participates in a wide range of environmental projects. School council members work actively with staff to put their suggestions into practice.

The school expects all pupils to achieve well. However, it does not ensure that all pupils build up a secure body of knowledge in key areas, such as reading and mathematics. Some pupils are not prepared for their next stages of education as effectively as they could be as a result.

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

The school has developed well-organised curriculums in most subjects. Pupils benefit from accessing high-quality texts, activities and resources. These broaden their understanding of the wider world. Pupils learn useful and interesting facts as they progress through the school. Nonetheless, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. This is because there are weaknesses in important aspects of the school's curriculum.

Pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics is variable. This is reflected in the school's 2023 published data. The school has taken action to strengthen the curriculum to address these weaknesses. For example, it has introduced a new mathematics scheme. Pupils' achievement in this subject is beginning to improve as a result.

The school has not focused sufficiently well on reading in recent years. Unlike other subjects, there is no overall structured reading curriculum. This adds to teacher workload. It also results in variation in the rate at which pupils build up their reading knowledge in different classes. While many pupils at the school become proficient readers, some do not develop the accuracy and fluency that they need to be able to access the rest of the curriculum easily.

More recently, the school has adopted a new phonics programme. However, although some staff deliver this new phonics programme to their classes, other staff continue to use the school's previous phonics programme. This inconsistent approach to the teaching of phonics means that some pupils' learning is uneven. Added to this, some teachers miss opportunities to address pupils' insecure phonics knowledge during lessons. Consequently, some pupils do not learn to read as quickly as they should.

In some other subjects, some teachers do not use assessment strategies sufficiently well to identify pupils' misconceptions or gaps in knowledge. This makes it more difficult for pupils to build securely on what they know already.

The school identifies the differing needs of pupils with SEND accurately and swiftly. However, due to the variation in the delivery of the curriculum, some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they could, especially in reading.

The curriculum used in the specially resourced provision is closely matched to pupils' needs. Here, teachers make sure that pupils have secured one piece of knowledge before moving on to the next. They also deliver the school's new phonics programme with fidelity. Therefore, pupils who access this provision, achieve well across the curriculum.

The school's checks on the overall effectiveness of its curriculum are not as secure as they could be. As a result, the school does not have an accurate picture of what is working well and what is not. Furthermore, governors readily accept the information that they receive about how well pupils achieve without providing sufficient challenge to the school. This slows the pace of school improvement, including how quickly pupils' achievement improves.

The school provides high-quality opportunities that make an effective contribution to pupils' wider development. Pupils have a secure understanding of people's differences and how diversity enhances the richness of society. Pupils take part in sporting competitions, and they enjoy showcasing their performance skills in drama and music. Activities such as these help pupils to understand the value of physical and mental well-being.

Pupils enjoy school and most attend regularly. In the main, pupils maintain their focus on learning during lessons.

The school community benefits from strong and positive relationships at every level. Staff appreciate the support for their well-being that they receive from the school and the governing body.

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 does not have a well-designed or organised reading curriculum. This increases teachers' workload. It also results in inconsistency in pupils' experiences in learning to read, including those at the early stages of reading. The school should ensure that teachers are well equipped to help all pupils to build up secure reading knowledge so that they can access the curriculum with greater ease.
- In some subjects, teachers do not check pupils' understanding carefully enough before presenting them with new information. Pupils do not build up their knowledge as well as they could as a result. The school should make sure that teachers consistently identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge so that they are ready for their next stages of learning.
- The oversight of the delivery and impact of the curriculum is variable. This means that the school sometimes does not notice when problems in the curriculum are beginning to emerge. The school should develop its ability to accurately evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and take appropriate steps to swiftly address any weaknesses.
- Governors do not hold the school to account as effectively as they should. This hinders the rate at which the school is improving pupils' achievement. The governing body should ensure that it is well equipped to provide effective challenge to the school to improve the quality of education that pupils receive.

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	112147
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10286242
Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	253
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sarah Layzell
Headteacher	Sue Frost
Website	www.ashfieldjuniorschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	2 and 3 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new chair of governors has been appointed since the previous inspection. Most of the members of the governing body are newly appointed.
- The school makes use of one unregistered and one registered alternative provision for pupils.
- There is a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND at the school. This is designated to support a small number of pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties. Places at this specially resourced provision are commissioned by the local authority. At the time of the inspection, the specially resourced provision was being used as a special educational needs (SEN) unit for a small number of pupils placed there by the local authority. These pupils spend most of their time there. Other pupils from the school also access this provision. The curriculum in the specially resourced provision is different to the curriculum followed by other pupils in the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's educational 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.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school. An inspector also spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- 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.
- An inspector observed pupils from reading to a familiar adult. She also listened to other pupils reading to her.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, including early reading; mathematics; physical education; computing and religious education. They spoke with the leaders of these areas of the curriculum. They also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke with pupils about their learning in other subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school. An inspector also scrutinised leaders' records of pupils' behaviour.
- An inspector visited the school's breakfast club.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and carers as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They also considered the responses to the online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Cleo Cunningham

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