

Inspection of a good school: Netherton Infant School

Rydal Avenue, Maryport, Cumbria CA15 7LT

Inspection date: 3 July 2024

Outcome

Netherton Infant School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' happy faces show how much they like their small, friendly school. Their parents and carers had many positive things to say about the support that their children receive. Two-year-old children are confident to say goodbye to their parents each day because they feel safe and secure. Older pupils relish the exciting activities that the school provides at breaktimes. Pupils thrive in the knowledge that staff care for them well.

The school expects pupils to do well so that they are ready for junior school when the time comes. Pupils work hard and try their best in lessons. They listen carefully to teachers and show perseverance when they learn new skills. Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), typically achieve well in a range of subjects.

There are clear rules and routines in place for pupils to follow. For example, pupils know that they should walk sensibly when moving around school. They show good manners when eating their lunch. In the early years, children help to keep their classrooms tidy by putting resources away when they have used them. This positive behaviour helps to keep the school calm and orderly.

The school provides pupils with a varied programme of activities beyond their academic learning. For instance, pupils can participate in after-school clubs for construction, sport or gardening. They visit art exhibitions and museums to learn more about the history of their community. Pupils learn, in age-appropriate ways, about the differences between people and their families. These activities help to prepare pupils for future life.

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

The school has put in place a broad, ambitious and exciting curriculum. All pupils learn this curriculum, including pupils with SEND. The school has considered what it most wants pupils to know and to be able to do by the time that they leave the school at the end of key stage 1. This important knowledge has been broken down into small, carefully

ordered steps from the early years to the end of Year 2. Staff ensure that they design learning that follows this order consistently. This helps to ensure that pupils build new knowledge on firm foundations.

Staff deliver the curriculum well. They make effective adaptations, when necessary, so that pupils with SEND can fully access learning alongside their peers. Staff check regularly in lessons to ensure that pupils understand the knowledge that they are learning. This helps to keep pupils focused and ensures that any misconceptions are addressed swiftly and successfully.

The school makes effective use of information from assessments to identify any gaps in knowledge that pupils may have. In most subjects, the school has a clear insight into whether the curriculum is helping pupils to know more and remember more over time. This helps the school to make any improvements to the curriculum if they are needed. In a few subjects, work to develop such an insight is at an earlier stage. This limits the extent to which the school can refine and improve the curriculum further in these subjects.

Reading is at the centre of the curriculum. In the Nursery classes, children are introduced to a wide range of stories, songs and rhymes. Older pupils are provided with an extensive selection of books to borrow and to read in school. They relish their regular visits to the local community library where they discover even more books. From the early years to Year 2, pupils develop a real love of reading and typically achieve well in this subject.

Despite the strong reading curriculum, fewer pupils than usual met the expected standard in the national phonics screening check in Year 1 in 2023. Some of these pupils missed considerable periods of education during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the early years. This slowed their progress through the phonics programme. Since then, the school has made considerable improvements to the way that pupils learn phonics. These actions have had a dramatic and positive impact. Pupils who needed to catch up in Year 2 have now made up the ground that they had lost.

Current pupils at the school achieve well in phonics. From the beginning of the Reception Year, children build solid, secure knowledge of letters and sounds, which increases rapidly in Year 1. They are able to apply their strong phonics knowledge successfully to their reading, writing and spelling.

Two-year-old children quickly develop confidence and curiosity for learning as a result of the high standard of care that they receive. Staff successfully promote children's ability to understand and to use language. The sensitive support that staff provide enables children to learn to share resources and to play happily alongside others. This prepares them well for the school's main Nursery class.

Any pupils, including children in the early years, who may have SEND have their needs identified quickly. The school communicates well with parents and professionals, when necessary, to secure expert support for pupils who need it. Pupils with SEND achieve well from their individual starting points.

The school successfully promotes pupils' regular attendance and punctuality, including in the early years. Pupils are attentive in lessons and they develop enthusiastic attitudes towards learning. They behave sensibly and appropriately for their age. This helps to create a positive environment where everyone can learn without disruption.

The school ensures that pupils develop an understanding of difference and diversity in their community and in the wider world. For example, pupils listen to stories from a range of cultures. Through the curriculum, they learn about world faiths and about values such as democracy, tolerance and respect. In ways appropriate to their age, pupils learn about relationships and about the importance of healthy lifestyles. The school provides pupils with exciting opportunities to contribute to their community. For example, pupils in Year 2 learned how to run their own business when they sold wristbands reminding people of the rules for water safety. These rich and varied experiences help to prepare pupils for life beyond school.

Governors and leaders have due regard for any impact on staff's workload and well-being when making decisions about the school. Staff appreciate this concern and they enjoy working at 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)

- In a very small number of subjects, the school's work to understand the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning is at an early stage. This limits the school from making any further, necessary improvements to these subject curriculums. The school should ensure that, in these remaining subjects, it has an accurate understanding of how the curriculum enables pupils to know more and to remember more over time.

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 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

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| Unique reference number | 112137 |
| Local authority | Cumberland |
| Inspection number | 10321331 |
| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 82 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Tina Beddoe |
| Headteacher | Lynn Millington |
| Website | www.nethertoninfants.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 18 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new chair of the governing body and a number of new governors have been appointed.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.
- The school provides early education and care for two-year-old children.

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 the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher and with other members of the leadership team.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body and spoke on the telephone to a representative of the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to some pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects and looked at a range of pupils' books.
- The inspectors considered the views expressed by parents in their responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included free-text comments. An inspector also spoke to a few parents at the start and at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors spoke to some pupils about their experiences of school life.
- Inspectors spoke with staff to discuss the school's support for their workload and well-being.
- 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.

Inspection team

Mavis Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Keith Wright

Ofsted Inspector

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