

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Milnthorpe Primary School

Firs Road, Milnthorpe, Cumbria LA7 7QF

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 November 2024

Outcome

Milnthorpe Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They see it as a friendly place where everyone is welcome. In the early years, children skip into class, full of excitement for the day ahead. Pupils who are new to the school settle in quickly and make new friends. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. This helps pupils of all ages to feel happy, safe and secure.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The exciting curriculum inspires pupils to learn. Pupils typically behave well in lessons. For example, they listen carefully and try not to disturb others by chatting. This sensible behaviour helps everyone to get on with their work. In all key stages, pupils achieve well in the subjects that they study.

Pupils are immensely proud members of their school. They delight in their success in local sports competitions. They especially enjoy inviting visitors to sit on their prize-winning 'reading throne', which they have designed themselves. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the many trips and residential visits that the school provides. Pupils participate wholeheartedly in these experiences, including those with SEND.

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

Pupils benefit from a broad and engaging curriculum. The school has carefully identified the important knowledge that it wants pupils to learn in each subject. Pupils learn this knowledge in well-ordered steps from the early years to Year 6.

The school ensures that pupils have plenty of opportunities to recall and to practise the skills that they have learned previously. This helps to ensure that pupils build a solid body of knowledge that they remember over time.

In most subjects, the curriculum ensures that pupils have opportunities to draw on their prior learning to help them to understand and make links with their new knowledge. For example, in mathematics, pupils use their earlier learning about multiplication to solve more complex calculations of two-digit numbers. Nevertheless, in a few subjects, the curriculum does not identify clearly enough how pupils should connect new knowledge with what they have learned in the past. In these subjects, pupils do not deepen their understanding of the bigger concepts that underpin their growing knowledge.

Staff use their strong subject knowledge to deliver the curriculum effectively. Pupils enjoy the interesting and engaging activities that staff provide. Carefully planned trips and visits enhance pupils' learning of the curriculum. For example, in the early years, children develop a sense of the place where they live when they visit local landmarks. This prepares them well for the geography curriculum in key stage 1.

Staff check regularly to ensure that pupils fully understand any new learning. Any misconceptions are swiftly addressed. The school is adept at using information from assessments to identify whether pupils have any gaps in their knowledge. This helps staff to adjust their activities if necessary. Pupils who may have SEND are identified quickly. Staff are skilled at making effective adaptations, where needed, to enable these pupils to learn the curriculum well.

The school ensures that pupils have opportunities to develop strong communication and language skills. Staff in the early years encourage children to talk about their thoughts and ideas confidently. Older pupils take part in regular discussions about different themes and topics. This supports pupils to develop an ever-expanding vocabulary in their conversations.

Reading has a high priority in the curriculum. Children learn the phonics programme from the Reception Year. The school ensures that pupils who struggle with phonics receive effective additional support to build their knowledge. Older pupils continue to develop their skills and confidence in reading. Pupils of all ages develop a real love of reading.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn about difference and diversity in British society. There are opportunities, such as being members of the school council and acting as prefects, that help pupils to prepare for their future lives. Pupils usually live up to the school's high expectations for their behaviour. The school is doing as much as possible and works successfully to maintain pupils' high rates of attendance.

When making decisions, the school carefully considers any impact on staff's workload. Staff are appreciative of the school's care for their well-being. The governing body asks pertinent questions to challenge and support the school's work. This helps to ensure that the school continues to fulfil its long-term priorities.

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 small number of subjects, the curriculum does not define clear opportunities for pupils to make connections between their current learning and their earlier learning. This sometimes hinders pupils from deepening their understanding of key concepts in these subjects. The school should ensure that, in these subjects, the curriculum helps pupils to understand key ideas so that they can apply their growing knowledge to an increasing range of situations.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in March 2015.

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 | 112184 |
| Local authority | Westmorland and Furness |
| Inspection number | 10348093 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 168 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Jayne Aynsley |
| Headteacher | Paul Macfarlane |
| Website | www.milnthorpe.cumbria.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 6 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- A new headteacher was appointed to the school on 1 September 2024. Since the last inspection, a new chair of the governing body has been appointed.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other school leaders.
- The inspector met with governors and with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also spoke with some pupils about wider school life.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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

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