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

Northside Road, Northside, Workington, Cumbria CA14 1BD

Inspection dates: 1 July 2025

Outcome

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

The executive headteacher of this school is Gemma Brierley. This school is part of the Cumbria Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Lorrayne Hughes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by George Beveridge. There is also an executive principal, Cate Floyd, who is responsible for this school and six others within the trust.

What is it like to attend this school?

Northside Primary School is a welcoming place. Pupils flourish in this caring and inclusive school. Staff are supportive; they encourage pupils to believe in themselves.

The school has high expectations for pupils' social and academic achievement. Pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The pastoral support for pupils is a strength of the school. This helps pupils feel safe. It supports them to be ready for their learning.

Pupils are courteous, well-behaved and proud representatives of their school. They show a genuine interest in visitors to the school, asking them questions and listening attentively to their responses. Children in the Reception Year are eager to invite visitors to join in their play. Pupils support one another and embody the trust's ethos of 'Be the best that you can be.'

Pupils are encouraged to expand their skills and interests. Pupils develop independence and resilience on residential trips. They enjoy cooking and food tasting at the 'around the world' club. Pupils eagerly embrace new experiences, including the recent 'innovate' competition. They enjoy taking on leadership roles. These include play leaders and school

councillors. These experiences help pupils build their confidence and prepare them for life beyond school.

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

The trust and school have established an ambitious vision to provide high-quality education. The trust and local governors challenge and support the work of the school well. This has helped to build successfully on the quality of education that the school offers. Pupils are central to the decisions that trust and school leaders make.

The school has developed an engaging and ambitious curriculum. It has carefully considered the knowledge that pupils should learn and when this subject content will be taught. The curriculum builds logically from the early years to the end of Year 6. Staff are confident about their subject knowledge. They know the important building blocks of information that pupils need to know and remember.

Reading is a high priority across the school. Staff are trained to deliver the phonics programme effectively. Children in the early years enjoy stories and rhymes, helping them to develop a love of books. Staff provide effective support for those needing extra help. This builds pupils' confidence, helping most to become fluent, accurate readers. This work continues across the curriculum, with a strong focus on teaching new vocabulary.

The school knows pupils and their families extremely well. Working closely with parents and carers, and other professionals, the school identifies pupils with SEND swiftly. Through this partnership work, the school gains important information about how to support pupils with SEND. Staff make adaptations to their teaching approaches so that pupils with SEND progress well through the curriculum.

In many subjects, teachers use their expertise successfully to identify and address pupils' misconceptions. However, this is less effective in writing. Staff do not consistently identify and address some of the key gaps that pupils have. This means that errors in some pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting go unchecked. Consequently, some pupils continue to repeat these errors.

Relationships between pupils and adults are very positive. Pupils follow the school's '3 Rs', where respect is key. The school teaches pupils to understand and manage their emotions. The school has rigorous systems in place to monitor pupils' attendance. The school promotes the message that any time away from school can lead to missing out on important aspects of learning. Pupils want to be in school. As a result, attendance is a much-improved picture.

The school places pupils' personal development at the centre of its work. It offers a rich array of opportunities that empower pupils to contribute meaningfully to their community. Pupils actively engage in charitable initiatives. They speak with pride about celebrating both their differences and shared experiences. Pupils gain a strong understanding of key messages around healthy relationships, mental well-being and online safety. Their

awareness of diversity is well developed, preparing them confidently for life beyond school.

Parents deeply value the school's nurturing environment and the support it extends to families. Staff share this positive view, expressing pride in being part of a school that prioritises its pupils. They feel respected and supported by leaders, especially in relation to their well-being. This enables staff to carry out their roles effectively and with enthusiasm.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, teaching does not identify the spelling, punctuation, and handwriting errors that some pupils make when they write independently. This means that some pupils continue to make the same errors over time. The school should ensure that these errors are identified and addressed swiftly so that pupils are supported to develop their writing accuracy and expertise across the curriculum.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in February 2020.

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	143536
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10378015
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	George Beveridge
CEO of the trust	Lorrayne Hughes OBE
Headteacher	Gemma Brierley (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.northside.cumbria.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 February 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.
- The school runs a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- This school does not use alternative provision.

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 inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector observed some pupils from Years 1 and 2 read to a familiar adult.

- 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.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body and the headteacher. She also spoke with a representative of the local authority. The inspectors met with leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- The inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- The inspectors looked at a range of policies and documentation relating to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school.
- The inspectors took account of the responses to the online parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- The inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Helen Friend, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Paul Edmondson	Ofsted Inspector

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