

Inspection of Ambleside CofE Primary School

Vicarage Road, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9DH

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 February 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

The headteacher of this school is Alison Broom. This school is part of The Good Shepherd Multi-Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Claire Render, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Peter Ballard.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this small school with a big heart. The school's values of, for example, friendship and forgiveness underpin the positive relationships that pupils have with each other. Pupils are happy. They feel cared for and safe.

The school is ambitious for all pupils to achieve well. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils achieve well in most subjects. However, pupils have gaps in their knowledge in some subjects. This means that their achievement is uneven overall.

Pupils behave well in lessons and at playtimes. They are thoughtful and well mannered. Pupils delight in the array of rewards that they receive for behaving well and working hard.

Pupils excel in their various roles and responsibilities. These include acting as school councillors, litter pickers and library monitors. Pupils make a tangible contribution to school life through these roles.

Pupils value the opportunities on offer beyond the academic curriculum. They take part in outdoor activities that help them to learn more about the natural world. For example, pupils enjoy learning in the school woodland area. This helps them to develop resilience and teamworking skills. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about making campfires and camping in the school grounds.

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

The school has recently taken decisive action to review and revise its curriculum. In most subjects, the school has thought carefully about the important knowledge that it wants pupils to learn over time so that they know more and remember more. Staff have benefited from curriculum training in recent times. Overall, they choose appropriate resources, activities and questions to help pupils learn. However, a number of the school's changes to the curriculum are very new. Some changes are too recent to have had an impact on pupils' achievement.

In a few subjects, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge as a result of weaknesses in the previous curriculum. The school has not put strategies in place to help staff to check what these pupils remember from previous learning. Some pupils, including pupils with SEND, experience learning that does not build on what they know or address the gaps in knowledge that they have. This means that over time, in some subjects, pupils' learning is insecure.

Children in the early years benefit from a well-thought-out curriculum. For the most part, the curriculum identifies the key knowledge that children in the Nursery and Reception classes should learn and the order in which content should be taught. Staff in the early years deliver the curriculum effectively. They use their in-depth knowledge of how children develop to design learning activities suited to children's

needs and interests. Typically, children are well prepared for key stage 1.

The school has prioritised the teaching of reading from the early years to Year 6. Pupils relish reading the range of books that are available from the well-stocked libraries. They enjoy listening to adults enthusiastically read carefully chosen books to them at story times. Overall, children in the Reception class and pupils in key stage 1 gain a secure knowledge of phonics. That said, a small number of staff are still developing their expertise in how to deliver the early reading and phonics curriculum. On occasion, the phonics curriculum is not delivered as intended. This holds back some pupils in becoming fluent readers as quickly as they should.

The school has recently devised approaches for checking and evaluating the delivery of the curriculum. However, this work is in its infancy, and there remains some variability in how well the curriculum is implemented. On occasion, the curriculum is not delivered as intended, and pupils' learning is hindered.

Pupils with SEND are fully included in the life of the school. There are effective systems in place to identify pupils' additional needs. The school ensures that pupils with SEND receive the support that they need to access the same curriculum as their peers.

Pupils behave sensibly in lessons. Low-level disruption is rare. Pupils recognise that rules are there to help them to learn and to keep them safe. Most pupils, including children in the early years, have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are keen to learn, and they work well together. Most pupils attend school regularly.

The school provides a wide range of opportunities to extend pupils' learning beyond their immediate environment. The school organises a range of trips and visiting speakers to help pupils to better understand the wider world. There are many opportunities for pupils to learn how to stay safe and to protect their well-being. Pupils learn about the differences between people, including different families and religions. Pupils benefit from opportunities to develop their talents and interests through clubs such as photography and singing.

Members of the board of trustees and of the local governing body are beginning to improve their oversight of the school's work. They have more accurate information about the curriculum and how well pupils achieve than previously. However, some of these improvements to governance are at an early stage. Trustees and governors offer an insufficient level of challenge to support the school to improve the quality of education.

Many changes have taken place since the previous inspection. However, the school pays close regard to the impact of these changes on staff's workload and well-being. The school considers how best to implement new initiatives without overburdening staff. Most staff feel valued and supported in their roles.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge due to weaknesses in the previous curriculum. This makes it difficult for them to make connections when they learn new content. The school should ensure that teachers are suitably equipped to use assessment strategies with confidence and accuracy, ensuring that gaps in pupils' learning are identified and tackled quickly.
- In some subjects, the school is not effective at evaluating the delivery and impact of the curriculum. This means that some weaknesses are not identified and acted on in a timely manner. In turn, this hinders pupils' achievement in these subjects. The school should ensure that it gathers and evaluates monitoring information effectively so that it can quickly address any shortcomings in the implementation of subject curriculums.
- A small number of staff do not deliver the school's phonics programme well enough. This hinders how well some pupils learn to read. The school should ensure that all staff are trained to deliver the programme effectively so that pupils learn to read confidently and fluently.
- Those responsible for governance do not have a sufficient depth of understanding of the quality of education that pupils receive. Over time, they have not challenged the school sufficiently well about pupils' learning. Trustees and governors should ensure that they gain a clear oversight of the effectiveness of the quality of education and hold the school to account for its actions to bring about improvement.

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	141978
Local authority	Westmorland and Furness
Inspection number	10294385
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Ballard
CEO	Claire Render
Headteacher	Alison Broom
Website	www.ambleside.cumbria.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 September 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Good Shepherd Multi-Academy Trust.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed to the school. The headteacher took up post in September 2023.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- This Church of England school is within the Diocese of Carlisle. The most recent section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in June 2019. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place from June 2024.

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 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leadership team. The lead inspector met with governors and trustees, including the chief executive officer. The lead inspector also spoke with representatives of the local authority and of the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 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.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in meetings and around school at lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also spoke with some parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses to the online survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Victoria Burnside, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Rachael Alarcon

Ofsted Inspector

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