

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Bowness-on-Solway Primary School

Bowness-on-Solway, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 5AF

Inspection date:

1 May 2025

Outcome

Bowness-on-Solway Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are welcomed warmly by staff each morning as they arrive at Bowness-on-Solway. In this rural community, staff get to know pupils well. The supportive relationships that staff build with pupils lie at the core of all that is on offer in this small, happy school. Pupils' well-being is a priority. The school supports them well, meeting each pupil's individual needs. Families are encouraged to join in with school life, for example during the recent '1875 Day' when the school celebrated its 150th anniversary.

Pupils are polite and respectful. They enjoy learning, especially outdoors. Learning is brought to life for pupils through the use of the school's forest area and access to the seashore. In science, for example, pupils enjoyed searching among the trees to find minibeasts.

Pupils live up to the school's high expectations. They achieve well. By the end of Year 6, they leave the school prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils relish opportunities to extend their academic learning, such as through visits to the museum and aquarium. There are opportunities for pupils to develop their interests, for example by joining clubs such as cross-country, mindfulness and podcasting.

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

The school continues to be ambitious for all pupils. It has made some changes to the curriculum to ensure that pupils in mixed-age classes can learn and achieve well. In many subjects, teachers are supported well to develop secure subject knowledge. Consequently, in these subjects, they teach well and bring learning to life for pupils.

In subjects where the curriculum is designed well, pupils talk about their learning confidently. They support one another well when they find something tricky. Regular checks on learning enable the school to identify how well pupils achieve. In these subjects, teachers use questioning to find out and address any gaps or misconceptions in pupils' knowledge.

Children begin the school's phonics programme in the Reception Year. Most pupils learn the sounds and letters that they need to enable them to read and write. Those pupils who struggle to keep up with the phonics programme are given appropriate support. However, some other pupils do not achieve as well as they should in reading and writing by the end of key stage 1. This is because the school has not thought carefully enough about the key vocabulary that pupils should learn. Added to this, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their phonics knowledge to their writing. Nevertheless, by the end of key stage 2, pupils have the knowledge and skills that they need in reading, writing and spoken language.

In the early years, children are helped to settle in quickly. They soon understand the routines of school. They learn how to take turns and listen to one another's ideas and thoughts. Children enjoy opportunities to learn through their own play as well as adult-led activities.

The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified in a timely way. Staff adapt activities to ensure that pupils with SEND can access the same curriculum as their peers. When necessary, more personalised support is provided to meet individual needs and to help these pupils to achieve well.

The personal, social and health education programme supports pupils in developing their understanding of mental well-being, physical health and citizenship. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. They know how to report any concerns. The curriculum helps pupils to have a secure understanding of equality. In addition, pupils benefit from the range of visitors to the school. These visitors help pupils to understand more about the world beyond their local community. Competitive sport is encouraged, and every pupil is offered the chance to represent the school. Recently, the gymnastics and swimming teams have enjoyed success.

Pupils know that they are expected to behave well. They are attentive in class and the school is calm and purposeful. At breaktime and at lunch, pupils are considerate with one another and play happily together.

The school places importance on pupils' attendance and takes effective measures to support the few pupils who struggle to attend school as regularly as they should. As a result, attendance rates are high.

Governors are mindful of staff's workload and well-being, particularly in the context of a small school. Staff feel valued by leaders and governors. Staff describe the school as being like a family. They enjoy working here.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a culture of safeguarding that supports effective arrangements to identify and help pupils who may be at risk of harm. However, the school does not record some actions taken well enough. This impedes the oversight that the school and governors currently have of safeguarding across the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, the school's procedures for recording and sharing information about safeguarding concerns are not sufficiently robust. Consequently, those responsible for safeguarding do not have a clear enough oversight of safeguarding concerns. The school must ensure that the processes to keep pupils safe are fully embedded.
- The school has not identified the vocabulary that it expects pupils to learn or opportunities to apply phonics knowledge to their writing sufficiently well. This means that, by the end of key stage 1, some pupils do not read and write as well as they should. The school should ensure that staff are equipped to help younger pupils build their reading and writing knowledge successfully.

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 May 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

Unique reference number	112414
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10348122
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Nicola Hutchinson
Headteacher	Stuart Walsh
Website	www.bowness-on-solway.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school offers a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- 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 visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also heard some pupils read to a familiar adult.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders.
- An inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at the start of the school day, during lessons and at breaktimes. They also spoke with pupils about their views of school life.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. An inspector also spoke to parents and carers as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff and pupils who responded to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Frith Murphy, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Cole Andrew

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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