

Inspection of a good school: Robert Ferguson Primary School

East Dale Street, Denton Holme, Carlisle, Cumbria CA2 5LA

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 January 2023

Outcome

Robert Ferguson Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils achieve well. This is because leaders and teachers have high expectations and, in most subjects, pupils benefit from curriculums that are well designed. Pupils enjoy their learning.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They show kindness towards each other. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn to be curious and imaginative. They enjoy talking about their learning with their peers.

Many pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including wheelchair basketball, calculations club and ukulele club. Pupils take great pride in helping each other. For example, older pupils thoroughly enjoy helping younger pupils develop a love of reading.

Pupils feel safe because leaders take action to stop any unkind behaviour, including bullying, that may make pupils feel unhappy.

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

Pupils follow a broad curriculum. In most subjects, leaders have ensured that the subject curriculums are ambitious and provide a rich set of experiences for all pupils, including children in the early years.

Subject leaders help staff to understand the content of the curriculum. This ensures that teachers have strong subject knowledge, which they use successfully to help pupils to know and remember more. As a result, children in the early years make a strong start to their education and pupils in Year 6 are well prepared for secondary school.

In a small number of subjects, leaders have not identified the key knowledge that pupils should learn. In these subjects, teachers are less clear about what to teach. This means that some pupils do not deepen their knowledge as well as they should.

Teachers successfully help pupils to revisit their previous learning. As a result, pupils can connect what they learn, and they develop a broad understanding of the subjects that they study. Teachers regularly check what pupils know. They use this information effectively to design activities that help pupils to fill in gaps in their knowledge. Teachers and support staff are quick to spot and correct misconceptions that pupils have about their work. Leaders ensure that pupils quickly access any extra help that they need, for instance during additional phonics sessions at the school's breakfast club.

Leaders have prioritised the teaching of reading. Children begin to learn to read as soon as they enter the early years. Children in the Nursery class enjoy songs and rhymes which extend their vocabulary and help them to hear sounds. This sets them up well for when they begin the phonics programme in the Reception class. Leaders have taken swift and effective action to ensure that the new reading curriculum helps all pupils to become fluent and confident readers.

Leaders have ensured that all staff who teach early reading are trained fully to support pupils effectively with their reading. Pupils read books that are matched to the sounds that they have learned. Those who find reading difficult are helped to catch up quickly with their peers. Leaders have ensured that pupils access a wide range of high-quality fiction and non-fiction books through the school's well-resourced libraries. Pupils develop a love of reading.

Leaders are quick to identify the needs of pupils with SEND and provide appropriate support. Teachers use the information that they receive well to make sure that pupils with SEND access the full curriculum.

Staff successfully teach pupils to behave well. This starts in the Nursery and Reception classes. As a result, learning is rarely interrupted. Any instances of low-level disruption are dealt with effectively by teachers.

Leaders are passionate about providing all pupils with a broad range of experiences to support their personal development. For example, pupils have developed their imagination and a love of writing through visits from famous authors. Pupils learn about different cultures and the importance of respecting the differences between themselves and other people.

Staff value the access that they have to meaningful training. Leaders are considerate of staff's workload and well-being. Governors know the school well and provide effective support and challenge to leaders. Staff are proud to work at this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong safeguarding culture at the school. They ensure that staff and governors complete regular safeguarding training.

Staff raise concerns swiftly. Leaders are quick to act on this information. Leaders and staff work effectively with families and other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe and get the help that they need.

Leaders ensure that pupils are taught about making healthy choices and staying safe, including how to protect themselves online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not set out the key knowledge that they want pupils to learn. This means that teachers do not ensure that pupils gain the depth of knowledge that they could. Leaders should finalise their curriculum thinking in these subjects so that all pupils learn the key knowledge that they need to prepare them for the next stage of their education.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2017.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	112242
Local authority	Cumbria County Council
Inspection number	10256183
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	437
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Esther Blake
Headteacher	Graham Frost
Website	www.rferguson.org
Date of previous inspection	21 and 22 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector completed deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and art and design. He met with subject leaders, visited lessons, including learning activities in the Nursery class, reviewed pupils' work and spoke with staff and pupils. The inspector listened to a selection of pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders throughout the inspection. The inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The inspector spoke to a general adviser from the local authority.
- The inspector met with leaders to discuss early years, SEND, behaviour and the provision for pupils' wider development.

- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. He took account of the responses from staff and pupils to Ofsted's online surveys and gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector met with leaders, staff and pupils. The inspector checked a sample of leaders' safeguarding records and reviewed the recruitment checks made on staff.

Inspection team

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates:
<http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023