

Kirkby Stephen Grammar School

Christian Head, Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria CA17 4HA

Inspection dates

12–13 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leadership is strong. Leaders have tackled the areas identified at the last inspection quickly and robustly. They have brought about significant improvements in a short time as a result.
- Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They hold leaders firmly to account to ensure that pupils receive a good standard of education.
- There is a significant shift in the culture of safeguarding, which now runs throughout the school. All aspects of safeguarding are scrutinised and everybody is keenly aware of the role they play in keeping pupils safe.
- Pupils achieve standards that are above average in a range of subjects. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.
- Positive relationships between staff and pupils are the backbone of this school. Mutual respect and care resonate throughout the school. Staff know the pupils and their families well.
- Strong pastoral support ensures that pupils receive emotional, academic and personal support in a caring and timely manner.
- Pupils' conduct around the school and in lessons is good. Pupils display positive attitudes to learning.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Pupils develop respect for others, regardless of differences. They are taught how to keep themselves safe and how to make a positive contribution to society.
- Pupils pursue their next steps in education, employment and training with confidence. This is as a result of the high-quality careers advice and guidance they receive throughout the school.
- The sixth form is inclusive and serves the local community well. Leaders are passionate and committed to raising students' aspirations. The vast majority of students achieve well and go on to secure high-quality jobs, university courses or further training.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. However, some variations in the quality of teaching and learning exist across subjects.
- The needs of some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or the most able pupils are not consistently met.
- The attendance of some disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is too low.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that they are in line with national averages.
- Continue to improve teaching by:
 - ensuring that the most able pupils are stretched and challenged so that higher proportions of these pupils achieve the top grades
 - ensuring that teachers consistently plan and teach lessons which are well matched to the needs of pupils, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Continue to improve leadership and management by:
 - reviewing and embedding new safeguarding systems so that they are fit for purpose and understood by all pupils and staff
 - building on improvements in the quality of teaching and learning to reduce further the variations in a small minority of subject areas so that pupils' progress is maximised across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new headteacher, senior leadership team and governors have high expectations for pupils. They have a clear and accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. As a result, leaders correctly prioritise plans for improvement and carry out their roles with determination.
- Leaders have taken decisive action to improve the culture of safeguarding throughout the school since the last inspection. A culture of safeguarding now runs throughout the school, from policy to practice and from Year 7 to governors. Leaders have introduced new procedures and reviewed others so that the school site is now a safer environment, which is appreciated by pupils.
- Positive relationships between pupils and staff are a strength of the school. The school is an integral part of the community and it serves the community well. Established links with parents ensure that all pupils and their families are known. This means that any support that pupils need is quickly identified and put into place. Parents are positive about the quality of education that their children receive and believe that they make good progress.
- Leaders set aspirational targets for pupils. They ensure that all teachers receive appropriate training matched to their needs. They use the experience of others in the local federation of schools to share expertise, and are now sharing the best practices currently in school to the benefit of all. All staff speak positively of the support and training they receive through the South Lakes Federation.
- Performance management and professional development for teachers are effective. Clear targets with measurable outcomes linked to the teachers' standards mean that leaders now take prompt action to address any areas of underperformance. They hold middle leaders and teachers to account for pupil progress. New assessment and reporting systems help leaders to check how well pupils are learning and put plans in place swiftly if any concerns are identified.
- The curriculum is broad and meets the needs of pupils. The curriculum is underpinned by a wide range of external visits and visitors to school. The provision for extra-curricular activities is strong, particularly in sports. Opportunities are wide-ranging, from the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme to the show jumping club.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of British values is of high quality.
- Middle leaders are committed to continuing school improvement and are dedicated to providing a high-quality standard of teaching and learning for pupils. There are effective systems in place to identify pupils who are falling behind and support is put in very quickly.
- Leaders are committed to promote equalities in school. Impressive displays in corridors demonstrate high-quality teaching of topics such as identity-based bullying, terrorism and British values, which pupils are taught in 'issues, values and beliefs' lessons. Pupils speak very highly of the quality of this subject and how it supports them to understand

others and celebrate diversity.

- Leaders take effective steps to remove any barriers to learning. Additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well used. As a result, differences in the progress and attainment of these groups of pupils are rapidly diminishing. Catch-up funding is used effectively in Year 7 so that pupils with low attainment on entry soon begin to make good progress, particularly in reading.
- The vast majority of pupils go on to appropriate higher education courses at prestigious universities, gain higher level apprenticeships or secure employment. Pupils speak very positively about the careers education that they receive. They are appreciative of staff's efforts to broaden their horizons and raise their aspirations, particularly in the sixth form.
- Leaders are working continuously to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Leaders are aware of some variations in teaching and learning, marking and feedback but have robust plans in place to address these.

Governance of the school

- Governors are highly committed and experienced. They are unwavering in their support of the school and are dedicated to ensuring that the school provides a good standard of education for the pupils in the local community.
- Governors have taken prompt and decisive action to improve the culture of safeguarding throughout the school and ensure that risks to pupils' safety are minimised.
- Governors have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They hold leaders firmly to account for all aspects of school life and ensure that staff are awarded pay progression only when appropriate.
- Governors and senior leaders have taken robust action to ensure that the school is financially viable. Under the strong leadership of the school's business manager, the budget deficit is decreasing. This puts the school on a firmer financial footing for the future.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders, governors and the whole school community have worked tenaciously to significantly improve the culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Improvements to site security and attendance procedures are regularly reviewed and improved further. Nobody is complacent about their role in ensuring effective safeguarding for all. Pupils say that they feel safe.
- Staff and pupils work well together. Bullying is rare. Pupils know whom to go to if they have any concerns and feel confident that issues will be dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Recruitment and vetting checks are robust and statutory requirements are met. All staff

are fully trained and receive regular safeguarding updates. Staff are vigilant and pass on any concerns to the appropriate leader. Leaders follow up concerns in a timely manner and ensure that pupils receive any support they need from external agencies.

- Pupils are taught how to stay safe, both personally and online. A comprehensive programme of lessons, supplemented by assemblies and visits, actively promotes all aspects of pupil welfare. Leaders make sure that pupils are taught about a wide range of risks, from child sexual exploitation and internet safety to local risks such as rivers and water danger. Pupils know how to make healthy choices and have an awareness of emotional and mental health issues.
- Pupils know and trust staff. Positive relationships between pupils and staff ensure that pupils have many adults they can talk to if they are worried or vulnerable.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use to engage pupils in interesting lessons, well supported by appropriate resources. Teachers use questioning effectively and responses are skilfully woven into lessons to deepen pupils' understanding.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently good and they are positively engaged. Pupils behave well and persevere in their learning.
- Levels of challenge in most lessons are high. For example, in physical education, Year 9 pupils were observed being encouraged to develop their strategic skills alongside practising basic skills. As a result, pupils made good progress.
- Pupils reflect on their learning and they demonstrate resilience. Many pupils are able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses in their work. As a result, they are aware of what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils write well and reading is a key focus across the school. Some teachers promote literacy very well and pupils are encouraged to use descriptive language.
- Teachers typically plan well to meet the needs of individual pupils, but some are less successful than others. At times, unclear explanations can lead to pupils still having misconceptions about what they are learning. At other times, some pupils are not moved on quickly enough when they have grasped a concept as they are often helping others around them.
- Teaching assistants have a good understanding of the needs of the pupils they support. They are well deployed and are generally effective. For example, in design technology, a tutorial with a pupil to embed their classroom learning successfully moved their learning on. Occasionally, teachers do not build upon the effective interventions delivered by teaching assistants. This means that the gains made in small-group work are sometimes not maximised in wider learning.
- Pupils take pride in their work, usually completing it to the best of their ability. Pupils and parents are aware of the importance of completing homework. Teachers generally use homework well to deepen learning.
- Regular reports provide pupils and parents with useful information and clear guidance

on what pupils need to do to improve. Most parents value this information.

- Teachers and leaders are committed to delivering high-quality teaching and learning. Senior and middle leaders drive successful initiatives based on improving different aspects of teaching throughout the year.
- There are some pockets of less-effective practice in a small minority of subjects. Leaders know where training is needed and are committed to using the extremely effective practice in school and the expertise provided by the South Lakes Federation to ensure that teaching is consistently strong across the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident, self-assured learners who show positive attitudes to learning. They are proud of their achievements and are proud of their school. They are happy to be at Kirkby Stephen Grammar School.
- Pupils are articulate and listen with respect to the views of others. Pupils are encouraged to voice their opinions and to be resilient.
- Through a strong curriculum of 'issues, beliefs and values', supplemented with assemblies and other experiences, pupils learn about British values while developing an awareness and respect for others who may have different views and belief systems. Pupils are tolerant and stress that they always treat people as individuals, regardless of differences.
- Highly effective careers advice and guidance begins in Year 7 and continues right through to the sixth form. This ensures that pupils are well supported to make informed decisions about their next steps.
- Personal development and welfare is a strength of the school. Pupils are taught to develop the personal skills and qualities necessary for success in the next stages of their educational journey. All pupils follow a recognised course in personal effectiveness and thoroughly enjoy and benefit from these lessons.
- Pupils are encouraged to be thoughtful and responsible citizens. Prefects model excellent care and support when dealing with younger pupils. The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school and feel that their children are happy and well cared for.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- High expectations of staff encourage pupils to arrive at lessons well prepared and ready to learn. There is a strong culture of learning throughout the school. Punctuality to lessons and to school is good. Leaders are visible on the gate and welcome pupils into school in the morning and at lunchtimes.
- Pupils are courteous and well mannered. They care for their environment and respect

others. The school's recent focus on ensuring that all pupils wear smart uniform and appropriate shoes has paid off. Pupils look smart and ready to learn.

- Pupils move sensibly around the school and are well behaved during lessons and social times. Teachers manage behaviour well and pupils respond appropriately to direction from staff or prefects. Behaviour of the small number of pupils who attend off-site provision is good.
- School records show that exclusions for poor behaviour are continuing to decrease. The previously high proportions of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who are excluded is also falling. This is a direct result of the prompt and personalised pastoral care and support put in place by form tutors, pastoral managers and senior leaders.
- Leaders continue to work tirelessly to improve attendance. Robust systems are in place to follow up absences, from initial responses to the involvement of governors. As a result, the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has decreased significantly to below the national average.
- The attendance of some disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving but is still below the national average. Leaders are aware of this and are committed to maintaining their focus in this area to secure further improvements.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' achievement is good in a wide range of subjects, such as English, history, geography, physical education, chemistry and art. Unvalidated examination results for 2017 show that pupils' achievement is stronger than that achieved in 2016 for most subjects.
- This year, almost three quarters of pupils achieved a good pass in both English and mathematics. From their starting points, this indicates good progress and is improving year on year. The outcomes for boys, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have improved considerably this year.
- Current pupils make good progress across a wide range of subjects. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils in 2017 in English was strong. Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress across year groups and subjects. Any differences with their non-disadvantaged peers are noticeably diminishing.
- Leaders and teachers are keenly aware of the needs of disadvantaged pupils and work tirelessly to support them. Well planned and effective mentoring programmes are in place to support pupils academically, emotionally and socially.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress at this school; in some subjects they are outperforming their peers. Interventions are effective and additional funding is used effectively to promote progress and achievement. Teaching assistants generally provide good-quality support for pupils. However, this support is less effective when the class teacher does not plan to fully meet the individual needs of some pupils.
- Aspirational targets are set for pupils and most are clear about what their targets are

and how to improve in most subjects. Due to clear guidance, such as 'learning journeys' in physical education and the clear assessment framework in art, pupils understand what they need to do to improve further.

- The small number of pupils who attend alternative provision for some of their education make good progress. This ensures that the majority of pupils gain valuable experience and are well placed to continue with their education and/or training.
- Leaders ensure that pupils receive high-quality independent careers advice and guidance, beginning in Year 7. Pupils experience a wide range of activities, both additional and through the curriculum, which prepare them well for the next stages in their education, employment or training.
- Reading is promoted strongly across the school and all pupils are encouraged to read widely and often. Teachers provide good examples for pupils by participating regularly in reading sessions with them. Older pupils are excellent role models and work with younger pupils to encourage them and develop their reading skills.
- It is clear from the school's examination information that in 2017 there were variations in outcomes for pupils in some subjects where a number of pupils did not achieve well. Leaders have robust plans in place to improve attainment in the small minority of underperforming subjects, with a clear focus on ensuring that the most able pupils are stretched and challenged to reach the highest grades.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Kirkby Stephen sixth form is inclusive, focused on meeting the needs of its students and serves the community well. Leaders are passionate, caring and know students well. There is an uncompromising drive to provide as many experiences as possible for students, to raise aspirations, broaden horizons and meet their individual needs.
- Significant improvements have been made to safeguarding in the sixth form since the previous inspection. Students respond well to leaders' requests to comply with new, more stringent procedures and are aware of the role they play in keeping everyone safe.
- Attendance procedures have been tightened with the result that attendance to lessons in the sixth form is good. These procedures are evolving and now need time to establish and embed.
- Students display extremely positive attitudes to learning and are proud to be members of the sixth form. They welcome, and thrive on, responsibility. All students spoken to during the inspection are aware of their responsibilities to be good role models for younger pupils and often help younger pupils with reading and academic support.
- Outcomes for students are generally good. Academic and vocational results in 2017 were strong in the majority of subjects. Results at AS level are historically not as strong as those at the end of Year 13, but leaders are proactive in addressing these issues.
- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good. Teachers' strong subject knowledge, high expectations and careful planning extends and deepens students' learning. The curriculum is broad and the school works effectively with other local institutions to provide a wide range of courses which prepare pupils well for life after sixth form.

- Pastoral support for students is strong. Students appreciate this and know that staff care about them. Highly effective careers education advice and guidance involves work experience, ongoing placements, social enterprise activities and a series of visits and talks aimed at setting students on appropriate pathways. The vast majority of students undertake appropriate employment, education or training, often with prestigious universities or highly regarded employers.
- Where variations in outcomes do exist, leaders take prompt action to provide support and challenge to ensure that students reach their potential. The small number of students who join the sixth form without a good pass in English or mathematics receive specialist teaching to help them to improve their grades. Initial results from 2017 indicate that this is not yet fully effective in ensuring success in these subjects.

School details

Unique reference number	137107
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10039271

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	390
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Weir
Headteacher	Mr Gary Hartley
Telephone number	01768 371693
Website	www.ksgs.cumbria.sch.uk
Email address	gary.hartley@ksgs.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 January 2017

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is a much smaller than average-sized secondary school for pupils from 11 to 18 years. The school is in a rural area and the majority of pupils travel long distances by bus to attend school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is lower than average. A number of pupils are

supported through the Year 7 catch-up premium.

- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is much lower than average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average, but the proportion who have a statement of special educational needs and/or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The school currently uses the Appleby Heritage Centre to contribute to the education of a small number of pupils. Some sixth-form pupils attend some classes at Appleby Grammar School.
- The school is a member of the South Lakes Federation of secondary schools.
- Since the last inspection, the school has appointed a new headteacher from September, 2017.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first monitoring visit since the school was placed into special measures in January, 2017. The visit was deemed a section 5 inspection.
- Inspectors observed learning across a wide range of subjects in different year groups. Some observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons, assemblies and other activities.
- Inspectors met with pupils to listen to their views, both formally and informally.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders, newly qualified teachers, groups of pupils and representatives from the governing body. Inspectors also met with a school improvement consultant.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation that covered: information about pupils' attainment and progress; the school's self-evaluation and its improvement plan; minutes of meetings of the governing body and records relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour and safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaks, lunchtimes, in assemblies, in lessons and at the end of the school day. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and looked at a sample of their books.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed by parents in the 71 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

Helen O'Neill, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Linda Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Jon Ashley	Ofsted Inspector

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