

Inspection of Dallam School

Haverflatts Lane, Milnthorpe, Cumbria LA7 7DD

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Most students in the sixth form feel safe. They are keen to succeed, and they are happy to attend school each day. However, while many pupils in key stages 3 and 4 enjoy school, others do not share these positive views about their experience. For example, some pupils do not feel that they receive the pastoral care and support that they need from staff. Some pupils explained to inspectors that this impacts negatively how protected they feel in school.

In recent years, the relationships between some staff and pupils have broken down. This makes some pupils reluctant to report concerns. Leaders are now taking appropriate steps to establish a respectful and caring environment between pupils and staff. When pupils report incidents of bullying, leaders deal with these incidents quickly and appropriately.

Leaders have raised their expectations of pupils' behaviour. However, leaders have not ensured that some staff apply the behaviour policy as leaders intend. As a result, the behaviour of some pupils continues to disrupt the learning of their peers.

Leaders have high aspirations for the achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). To this end, they have designed an ambitious curriculum for pupils. However, some teachers lack the expertise to deliver aspects of the curriculum well. This prevents some pupils from achieving as well as they should.

Pupils and students value the range of trips that leaders have designed to extend their learning beyond the classroom. For instance, in geography, students relish the opportunity to travel to Iceland to learn about glaciation. Pupils develop their confidence and resilience by taking on leadership positions, such as acting as reading buddies for younger pupils.

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

Leaders have given considerable thought to the knowledge that pupils must learn and when this content should be taught by staff. They have made sure that the curriculum, including in the sixth form, is designed to help pupils and students to build their knowledge cumulatively over time. However, some teachers do not have sufficient knowledge and expertise to deliver aspects of the curriculum as leaders intend. As a result, some activities that teachers select do not help pupils to deepen their understanding of earlier learning.

In recent months, leaders have placed greater emphasis on how well staff are supported to deliver the curriculum. This includes providing appropriate training and support for teachers. However, this work is still in its infancy. As such, some pupils do not learn as well as they should in some subjects.

In some subjects, teachers do not use assessment strategies well to identify and address pupils' misconceptions. Therefore, staff are not sufficiently well informed about how to adapt and shape the delivery of the curriculum, including for pupils with SEND. As a result, some teachers introduce new concepts and ideas before checking if pupils' prior knowledge is secure. This means that some pupils are not supported well to build securely on their learning over time.

Leaders are skilled at identifying the needs of pupils with SEND in a timely manner. They provide teachers with useful information about the additional needs of these pupils. This helps staff to adapt how they deliver the curriculum for pupils with SEND. Nonetheless, weaknesses in how well the curriculum is delivered to all prevent some pupils with SEND from achieving as well as they should.

Leaders are in the early stages of prioritising the teaching of reading. However, from time to time, some pupils do not receive the support that they need to help them catch up quickly with their reading knowledge.

Leaders have overhauled their systems to tackle the poor behaviour of some pupils. This is starting to have a positive impact on pupils' conduct during lessons. However, some pupils' learning continues to be disrupted by the behaviour of their peers.

Leaders have invested in resources to increase pupils' rates of attendance. For instance, by training staff and improving the systems that staff use to communicate with parents and carers. As a result, more pupils attend school as often as they should.

Leaders have designed the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum to enable pupils to explore the differences between people and places. Even so, this is not delivered well by some staff. Some pupils, including students in the sixth form, do not value their learning in PSHE. This hinders some pupils' understanding of aspects of this programme, such as the importance of respecting others and the negative effects of discriminatory language.

In the past, leaders have not ensured that some pupils have benefited from timely and appropriate pastoral care. As such, some pupils have not received the support that they need. Leaders are already addressing the weaknesses in pastoral care for pupils. For instance, they have ensured that staff receive appropriate training and recruited additional staff so that they can respond to the needs of pupils more swiftly.

Leaders have forged strong connections with businesses and local colleges to help to broaden pupils' understanding of life beyond school. Leaders ensure that pupils are informed well in readiness for their next steps. After leaving school, most pupils and students enter education, employment or training.

Governors are mindful of the impact that the turbulent leadership of recent years has had on pupils and staff. They are eager to make rapid gains in the quality of education for pupils. To this end, they provide robust challenge to leaders.

Leaders have strived to understand the needs of staff and pupils during the many positive changes that they have made. This has helped leaders to monitor staff well-being and to support staff to manage their workload. In the main, staff, including those in the early stages of their careers, feel well supported by leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

In recent months, leaders have recently made considerable and appropriate changes to how safeguarding incidents are reported and recorded by staff. Leaders disseminate regular safeguarding updates to all staff. This helps to keep staff's knowledge of their safeguarding responsibilities current and relevant. It also helps staff to remain vigilant about the issues that pupils may face.

Leaders liaise well with external agencies to ensure that pupils that may be at risk receive appropriate support.

While pupils learn about the dangers that they may encounter, some pupils are less well informed about the risks that they may face. Leaders have acted successfully to ensure that pupils learn about the risks they may encounter and how to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not have sufficient knowledge and expertise to deliver some aspects of the curriculum, including the PSHE programme, well. This means that some pupils do not learn the curriculum as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that teachers receive the support that they need to design learning that supports pupils to learn the intended curriculum and deepen their understanding of concepts over time.
- Some teachers do not use assessment strategies well to identify pupils' misconceptions and design subsequent learning for pupils. This means that some pupils are unable to build securely on earlier learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers are suitably equipped to use assessment strategies skilfully to identify and address pupils' misconceptions in a timely manner.
- On occasion, some pupils do not receive appropriate support to catch up in reading as quickly as they should. This hinders how well these pupils can access and successfully learn the intended curriculum. Leaders should ensure that teachers are well equipped to support pupils to become confident, fluent readers.
- Some staff do not apply leaders' systems to manage pupils' behaviour as leaders intend. This means that some pupils' learning is disrupted by the behaviour of others. Leaders should ensure that staff are supported well to use leaders'

systems to manage pupils' behaviour consistently well.

- In the past, leaders have not ensured that some pupils benefit from timely and appropriate pastoral care. This means that some pupils have not received the support that they need. Leaders should ensure that they continue their work to build support and training for staff so that staff can respond to and deal with issues swiftly and effectively.

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	137205
Local authority	Westmorland and Furness
Inspection number	10244606
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,048
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	153
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trustees	Alan Gerrard
Headteacher	Steven Henneberry
Website	www.dallamschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 December 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school is part of the South Westmorland Multi-Academy Trust.
- Since the ungraded inspection in December 2017, there have been several changes to the leadership of the school. The current headteacher was appointed in February 2023.
- The school provides boarding provision for pupils aged 11 to 18 at Whitbarrow Hall on the Heversham site. The capacity for the boarding provision is 128 pupils. Currently, 43 pupils and students use this provision.
- Leaders make use of nine registered alternative provisions for a few pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the senior leader and subject leads. Inspectors also met with a range of other staff and sixth-form leaders during the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke to representatives of the local advisory committee, including the chair of the board of trustees, as well as a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils and observed pupils' behaviour during social times.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, English, Spanish, art and design and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders and teachers, visited a sample of lessons, reviewed samples of pupils' work and spoke with some pupils, including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils.
- In addition, inspectors met with other subject leaders and visited a sample of lessons in other subjects.
- The inspection team analysed safeguarding documentation, including the single central record. Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils, staff, leaders and a representative of the local authority to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' self-evaluation and attendance and behaviour records and minutes of meetings involving those responsible for governance.
- The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Amina Modan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Paula Crawley	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Kenyon	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Hollister	Ofsted Inspector
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