

# Inspection of Thwaites School

Hallthwaites, Millom, Cumbria LA18 5HP

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Inspection dates:	15 and 16 July 2025
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

This small, rural school offers a caring, close-knit environment where pupils feel supported. Pupils and their families receive a warm welcome at the school gate. In the playground, pupils are happy to see one another. Friendships form across year groups and pupils feel safe in this friendly school community.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. Staff know pupils well. They help pupils to thrive and enjoy their learning. Typically, this enables pupils to be well prepared for the next stage of their education.

At breaktime, pupils play together cooperatively. They enjoy activities such as football, climbing and exploring nature in the school grounds. Older pupils enjoy helping younger pupils with their games. Pupils follow routines that keep breaktimes safe and enjoyable for everyone.

Pupils benefit greatly from the wide range of clubs on offer. Popular choices include art, 'taskmaster', dance and dodgeball. These activities help pupils to develop their talents, build confidence and learn new skills. Pupils attend regularly and talk about them with excitement. Pupils take pride in leadership roles, such as library monitors, shopkeepers or school council members. These responsibilities promote independence and teamwork. They also make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils grow in confidence and show a clear sense of responsibility.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has revised its curriculum, including that for the early years. It has carefully designed the content of most subjects so that staff know what to teach and when to teach it. In these subjects, the school ensures that teaching enables pupils to build on what they already know. Staff use their secure subject knowledge to teach with confidence. They check effectively how well pupils remember what they learn over time. However, the curriculum in a small number of subjects does not set out when some key knowledge should be taught. This affects some pupils' learning of important curriculum content. This is because new learning does not build on what pupils already know and can do.

In the early years, staff help children develop their communication and social skills through carefully considered interactions. From the Nursery Year, children are read to and encouraged to choose books for themselves. This promotes children's love of stories. Older pupils are encouraged to read a range of books and learn about different authors. They enjoy discussing their thoughts about what they have read.

The teaching of early reading and phonics is prioritised. The school's phonics programme begins in the Reception Year. By the end of Year 2, pupils gain the knowledge of sounds and letters that they need to become confident readers. Most pupils who need additional support are helped to keep up with their peers through the phonics programme.

The school identifies those pupils who have additional needs. However, it does not ensure that staff understand well enough these pupils' specific special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and how to best support them. At times, this hinders how well these pupils achieve in some subjects.

Pupils are polite and respectful. They understand the school rules, 'Be ready, respectful and safe'. Classrooms are typically calm and orderly. Pupils are motivated by the school's reward system and enjoy earning 'rainbow notes' for their effort and good behaviour. They learn to save and spend these notes thoughtfully in the school's rainbow shop.

The school provides an exceptional personal development offer. Thoughtfully planned experiences, including a range of meaningful trips, deepen pupils' understanding across the curriculum. For instance, the school brings science and geography to life through visits to forests, rivers and beaches. Matches and competitions also help pupils to build friendships with those from other schools, easing their transition to secondary school. Pupils develop their independence skills through camping and residential opportunities, including a memorable visit to London. The school enables pupils to develop respect for different faiths through visits to a mosque and a Buddhist temple. Pupils leave exceptionally well prepared for life in modern Britain.

The school prioritises attendance. Its systems help pupils to attend regularly. When needed, pupils and their families receive extra support to improve attendance.

Since the last inspection, governors have improved their oversight of the school. They understand the school's strengths and areas for development well. The governors value staff well-being and are mindful of workload. Staff are given time to complete additional tasks and enjoy working at the school. This has enabled staff to contribute to the design of the new curriculum.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In a small number of subjects, the school has not sequenced the key knowledge that should be taught. This means that, at times, teaching activities do not build on prior learning. This can limit pupils' depth of understanding. The school should refine its curriculum in these subjects so that it is clear the order in which knowledge should be taught.
- The school does not ensure that staff have all of the information that they need about pupils with SEND. As a result, staff do not adapt some lesson activities sufficiently well

so that these pupils can access the curriculum successfully. The school should ensure that staff are equipped to meet the needs of pupils with SEND well.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	112166
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	10377945
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	40
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Ged McGrath
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mark Redhead
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thwaites.cumbria.sch.uk">www.thwaites.cumbria.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	7 and 8 February 2023, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.
- The school has a breakfast club and after-school provision.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed with pupils their learning in some other subjects.
- An inspector observed pupils from Year 1 to Year 3 read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders. An inspector also met with members of the governing body, including the chair.
- An inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and breaktimes. They also spoke with pupils about their views of school life.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers. They reviewed the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff and pupils who responded to Ofsted's surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Frith Murphy, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Cleo Cunningham

Ofsted Inspector

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