

Inspection of Solway Community School

Liddell Street, Silloth, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 4DD

Inspection dates:	3 and 4 December 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are polite and kind. Through their actions, they are proud to act out the school's values of respect, courtesy and compassion. Pupils make a strong contribution to the calm and respectful atmosphere that exists at the school.

Pupils respond well to the high expectations that the school has of their achievement and conduct. They appreciate the help that they receive from staff, who care for them well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in the life of the school.

The school provides pupils with access to activities that help them to develop their talents and interests. These include sports, art and drama clubs and the school's brass band. Trips to places of interest help to deepen pupils' understanding of the subjects that they study. For example, pupils visit art galleries, places of worship and they enjoy trips abroad. The school ensures that all pupils benefit from these opportunities.

Pupils learn to make a positive contribution to their community. For example, they run sports festivals for primary school children and raise money for local charities. These help pupils to become confident and resilient young people.

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

The published data does not reflect the strengths of the educational offer at this school. In 2023, the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 11 was significantly below the national average. A high proportion of pupils in this year group joined the school at various stages throughout Year 10 and 11. In addition, the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that these pupils did not have time to benefit from the school's well-designed curriculum. Most current pupils achieve well.

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum. It has thought carefully about the important knowledge that pupils should learn. Most pupils are well prepared for each stage in their education. The school takes great care to ensure that pupils in Year 11 move on to appropriate destinations. These include further education, apprenticeships or employment with training.

Typically, staff use their subject knowledge to design activities that help most pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding securely over time. On occasion, the activities that some staff create do not help pupils to build their knowledge sufficiently well. When this happens, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Staff make regular checks on what pupils know and remember. They appreciate the recent improvements to the school's assessment strategy, which has supported their well-being. At times, staff do not promptly address the gaps and misconceptions that some pupils have about their learning. When this happens, some pupils move on to new learning before they are ready.

The school accurately identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND. It provides staff with clear guidance about how to support these pupils effectively. Staff use this information well to ensure that these pupils can learn successfully alongside their peers.

The school identifies and addresses the reading needs of pupils with precision. For some pupils, this includes help to fill any gaps that they may have in their phonics knowledge. Books are well matched to each pupil's stage in their reading development. The school provides pupils with the support that they need to become confident and fluent readers.

The books that pupils read make a meaningful contribution to their understanding of the world. For example, pupils read books that help them to appreciate the differences that exist between people, to spot and to challenge views that may be considered extreme and to recognise the features of a healthy relationship.

The school provides well-considered support to a small number of pupils that need help to manage their own behaviour. These pupils respond well to this help. In lessons, pupils are well motivated and they engage positively with staff about the work that they are given. The school provides effective help to pupils who may need to improve their attendance. For example, the school has successfully addressed the barriers that have prevented some pupils from attending regularly. This has reduced the number of pupils that are persistently absent from school.

The school's personal development provision prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils know how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. They know how to keep themselves safe, including online. Pupils benefit from an extensive programme of careers education. They take part in work experience that is well matched to their interests and aspirations. This helps pupils to make informed decisions about their futures.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, staff design activities that do not help pupils to develop sufficient depth of knowledge in the subjects that they study. This prevents some pupils from achieving as well as they could. The school should provide staff with the training that they need to design learning activities that prepare pupils well for each stage of their education.
- On occasion, the school is not quick enough to rectify the gaps and misconceptions in some pupils' knowledge. This means that these pupils move on to new learning before they are ready. The school should ensure that staff address pupils' misunderstandings in a timely manner so that pupils build their knowledge securely over time.

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	112377
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10348114
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	147
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Davidson
Headteacher	Tom Hailwood
Website	www.solwayschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	18 and 19 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 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. 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.

- This was the first routine inspection that 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 carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, science and physical education. For each deep dive, they held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with staff, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with subject leaders and looked at pupils' work in mathematics, geography and Spanish.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He also spoke with the local authority general adviser.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss SEND, reading, pupils' behaviour and attitudes and the provision for pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They took account of the responses from staff and pupils to Ofsted's online survey and gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke to staff about their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Edmondson

Ofsted 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 2024