

Inspection of a good school: Eskdale School

Stainsacre Lane, Whitby, North Yorkshire YO22 4HS

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 November 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's curriculum has been carefully considered so that lessons are planned to follow on from each other in a sensible way. Leaders have made sure that the curriculum delivers the full scope of the national curriculum. Pupils' attitudes to learning are usually positive. However, some pupils do not produce the quality of work they are capable of. Some teachers plan activities which do not help pupils to learn important knowledge. Many pupils lack confidence when talking about their learning. Sometimes, pupils do not get the support they need to learn.

Pupils say they feel safe at the school. Inspectors agree with them. The expectations staff have of pupils are variable. Because of this, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Pupils behave well around the school. Pupils are respectful towards each other, adults and visitors. If this is not the case, pupils say that school leaders deal with this.

The COVID-19 restrictions limited learning beyond the classroom. Leaders have worked hard to develop these opportunities since then. Leaders have made sure many of these experiences are in place again. Many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, take part in the range of clubs and activities available. Leaders are also developing the extra support some pupils need. For example, pupil support groups work within the school and in the wider community to help others.

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

Leaders have reviewed the curriculum for all pupils. They have made sure that pupils study learning pathways which are in their best interests. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Lessons are planned so that pupils can build their knowledge and skills. In some subjects, pupils revisit prior learning. Where this happens, pupils remember the important things they

have learned. This approach is not used consistently across the school. Teachers check pupils' understanding throughout each lesson in every subject. They use different ways to do this. Some methods are more effective at developing pupils' learning than others. For example, in English and mathematics, teachers' checks help pupils to improve their work. In some lessons, these checks are less purposeful, and pupils do not respond to them as they should. In some science lessons, pupils are asked to demonstrate their learning independently at the end of each session. Teachers then identify how much they have understood, and adapt the next lesson. However, this approach is not used consistently in all classes.

The curriculum in modern foreign languages is well sequenced. Teachers use several methods to help pupils gain confidence in their use of language. For example, they use sentence builders to help pupils. Teachers use the local context to develop language learning. For example, they use themes such as 'Dracula' and 'life in school' to best effect. Pupils who study a language at key stage 4 are developing strong knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. This is less strong in key stage 3. Leaders are keen to encourage more pupils to study at least one language at key stage 4. They have changed the framework of option choices for key stage 4. Pupils are now able to choose a variety of subject combinations and include a language, too.

The support available for pupils with SEND is inconsistent. In the best examples, planned activities remove barriers to learning. However, not all activities are as well planned. This can prevent pupils with SEND from learning. Some pupils arrive at the school with low reading attainment. Leaders have begun to put in place strategies to help them. These are in the early stages and are not coordinated fully across the school.

Most pupils attend school regularly. However, leaders recognise that there is a culture of poor attendance among a small number of pupils. Leaders are working hard to encourage these pupils to improve their attendance further. Pupils behave well at this school. Leaders encourage pupils to report any inappropriate behaviour or comments from others. This includes any which make them feel uncomfortable. Leaders take effective action if such incidents occur. Pupils say that bullying is rare. When it does occur, leaders deal with it.

Leaders are developing a programme of careers advice and guidance for pupils. This meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. They have invited colleges and training partners to speak to pupils. Pupils from Year 9 onwards also have individual careers interviews.

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in leadership at all levels. The new head of school is working with the recently appointed executive headteacher, and the necessary improvements are happening. Leaders have taken into consideration the well-being and workload of staff. Staff report that they are proud of, and are very happy to work in, the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that the procedures for checking, recruiting and training staff are robust. All staff have regular safeguarding training. Staff take swift action to ensure that pupils receive the help they need. All staff and pupils know whom to talk to when they have a concern.

Leaders have worked hard to make sure pupils are supported if they have concerns or worries. This includes those who are the most vulnerable.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils know the names of the designated safeguarding leads in the school. They understand what leaders can do to help them.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is not delivered consistently well in all lessons. Planned activities do not effectively support pupils to meet the intended learning outcomes. Leaders should ensure that all learning activities are purposeful and support pupils to build new knowledge that prepares them for the next stage in their education.
- The support for pupils with SEND is inconsistent. Some learning activities are not structured well enough to support pupils' learning. This prevents them from reaching the intended learning outcomes. Leaders should ensure that targeted support for pupils with SEND is consistently delivered.
- Assessment across the school, and within some subjects, is variable. This limits how effectively pupils are able to build on what they already know. Assessment should clearly focus on the important knowledge pupils need to learn. Leaders should establish assessment approaches which are fit for purpose and support pupils to embed and use knowledge with confidence.
- Leaders have not fully developed coordinated strategies to help pupils who need to improve their reading. Some pupils do not make the progress in learning that they are capable of. Leaders should ensure that pupils who need support with reading receive the targeted intervention required to support them in reading with accuracy and fluency.

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	121668
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10240469
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	408
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Co-chairs of governing body	Su Crossland and Christina Zanelli
Head of school	Philip Nicholson
Website	http://eskdale-school.co.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- When Eskdale School was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good overall.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- A very small number of pupils attend registered off-site alternative provision at Caedmon College.

Information about this inspection

- 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 met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, senior leaders, curriculum leaders and other members of staff. The lead inspector met with representatives of the local governing body, including the co-chair of governors, and the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They gathered pupils' views about the school through formal and informal discussion.

- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school’s self-evaluation and improvement priorities and safeguarding documents. Inspectors evaluated information relating to pupils’ behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who responded to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, along with responses submitted as free text. Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted’s staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.

Inspection team

Barry Found, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Toni Spoons

Ofsted Inspector

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