

Plumpton School

Address: Plumpton, Plumpton School, PENRITH, Cumbria, CA11 9PA

Unique reference number (URN): 112120

Inspection report: 24 February 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders communicate clearly the importance of pupils attending school regularly. Leaders are diligent in checking pupils' rates of absence. Leaders take prompt and appropriate action to work with parents and carers if their child is not attending as regularly as they should. These actions are effective. This is reflected in the school's consistently high levels of attendance, which are above the national average.

Leaders and staff have created a caring school environment, with pupils' wellbeing and happiness at its core. They take time to listen to pupils and take seriously any concerns that pupils have. Pupils know that, should they occur, bullying or discrimination would be swiftly dealt with. Staff and pupils have a shared understanding of the school's expectations for behaviour. Staff support pupils to meet these expectations through consistently modelling and applying the school's behaviour procedures. Pupils behave well. They are respectful to others and enjoy helping each other to succeed. Staff help pupils to develop a positive attitude to learning and to build their emotional resilience. Pupils work hard in lessons and demonstrate pride in their work. Leaders ensure that pupils' behaviour does not disturb the learning of others.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders build positive relationships with parents and carers as soon as pupils join the school. They are proactive in their communication with other professionals. This helps leaders and staff to gain an early understanding of, and to swiftly meet, the unique and evolving needs of each pupil. This includes the needs of pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school has a clear approach to supporting pupils who face challenges in their learning or to their wellbeing. Leaders ensure that this approach is understood by staff. Staff make adaptations to their teaching to ensure that all pupils can successfully access the curriculum. They follow specialist advice and provide pupils with targeted help and tools to support their learning. For example, pupils use resources and access cosy spaces that help to meet their sensory needs. This enables pupils to focus and has a positive impact on their achievement and wellbeing. Leaders regularly review the appropriateness of the support in place for pupils. These reviews inform subsequent decisions about further support. This includes leaders' use of additional funding, which is carefully considered and has a positive impact on the achievement and wider development of disadvantaged pupils.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Promoting pupils' personal development is at the heart of this school. Leaders and staff know pupils and their families well. They provide individualised pastoral support to meet the needs of each pupil. This includes pupils who face additional challenges to their wellbeing. This has a positive impact on developing pupils' social skills, resilience and the confidence to talk about their emotions.

The school has a well-designed personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. It is broad, helps pupils to build their knowledge and reflects the local context and the needs of pupils. For example, there is a specific focus on the pertinent risks associated with the school's rural location. The programme teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe online and offline. Through the school's relationships and health education programme, pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of what constitutes healthy and unhealthy relationships.

The school provides pupils with first-hand experiences to broaden their horizons that they may not otherwise encounter. This includes flying a drone, meeting an author, playing chess and going on a camping trip. Extra-curricular trips also enrich pupils' learning. For example, pupils learn about the use of technology in farming. Leaders ensure that there are no barriers to participation, including for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils develop their character and leadership skills through taking roles, such as 'digital leaders', 'tech crew' and 'reading ambassadors'. Pupils are proud to have these responsibilities and recognise the impact that they can have on the school.

Pupils develop their understanding of fundamental British values and have opportunities to explore how these can be lived out through their own lives. However, pupils do not have a deep understanding of this. The school takes deliberate steps to broaden pupils' understanding of diversity. For instance, pupils go on trips to urban areas, learn about wheelchair basketball and take part in workshops about different religions. Pupils are clear that everyone is welcome at their school. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Leaders have not ensured that pupils secure the important knowledge and skills they need, particularly in mathematics. Consequently, in recent years, pupils have not achieved as well as they should. This is reflected in pupils' outcomes in end of key stage 2 external tests. Across the wider curriculum, historical weaknesses have led to pupils not developing the depth of understanding they need. Leaders have taken effective action to address this, resulting in a demonstrable impact on current pupils' rates of progress through the curriculum. Pupils are now building their knowledge well. However, it is too soon to know the long-term impact of this. Some pupils, particularly in the early years and key stage 1, have not secured the key knowledge they need to be prepared for the next stage of their learning.

Conversely, pupils at the early stages of learning to read progress well through the school's phonics programme. They are quickly gaining confidence and fluency in their reading.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders have not ensured that teaching of the new curriculum content is consistently well matched to what pupils know and need to know next. Teachers' checks on pupils' knowledge do not provide them with the information that they need about whether pupils are ready to

move their learning on. This makes it difficult for teachers to ensure that support for pupils who need to catch up targets specific gaps in their knowledge, particularly in mathematics.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching. Since the last inspection they have made improvements to the design of the curriculum to ensure that it is broad and engaging and identifies what pupils will learn at each stage. The curriculum is designed to build incrementally on pupils' knowledge over time.

Teachers are knowledgeable. They access professional learning opportunities that ensure they continue to build on their expertise. Teachers provide clear explanations as they introduce new concepts to pupils. They promote pupils' widening vocabulary and develop their communication skills.

Teachers ensure that they cater for the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, pupils benefit from using concrete resources that help them to practise before recording their work.

Early years

Needs attention 

Despite recent improvements, the curriculum does not provide sufficient clarity about the progression of intended learning from Nursery to Reception. While children access a range of engaging activities, there is variability in how effectively these build children's knowledge. This hinders some children from being prepared for Year 1. Leaders recognise this and have taken appropriate steps to improve the quality of the early years, including developing the environment to support children's learning.

The school's focus on communication and early reading is a success of the early years provision. Phonics is prioritised and taught well. Children in Reception confidently use their knowledge of sounds to read and write words. Staff use their interactions with children to promote their communication skills. They provide targeted support to children who struggle with their speech. Nursery-aged children delight in participating in singing and language games. This helps them to extend their vocabulary and to become confident communicators.

Staff build warm, trusting relationships with children. They meet their personal care needs well and foster their independence. Children are happy and secure in the early years environment. Staff work in partnership with parents and carers to support children's development at school and at home.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Governors understand and are committed to their roles. However, there is variability in how effectively they hold leaders to account for some aspects of the school's work. For example, governors do not check with enough rigour the impact of leaders' actions to improve the quality of the curriculum and pupils' achievement. This hinders them from ensuring weaknesses in these areas are swiftly addressed. That said, governors do have clear oversight of safeguarding and provide effective challenge to leaders in relation to managing the school's resources, including additional funding for disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders have a clear vision for the school. They know which aspects of the school need to be strengthened. Leaders take appropriate action to address these aspects. Leaders and staff make decisions in the best interests of pupils, including those who face barriers to their learning or wellbeing.

Staff are proud to work at this school. They describe it as 'a family', where everyone is valued. Leaders, including governors, carefully consider the impact on staff's workload and wellbeing when making changes to policies or practices.

Leaders prioritise the ongoing development of staff's knowledge and skills through a range of professional learning opportunities. This includes working with specialist professionals, undertaking professional qualifications, and sharing practice through forging partnerships with other schools.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils thoroughly enjoy attending this caring school. They consistently describe it as a happy and safe place to be and to learn. Key stage 2 pupils cherish the opportunities they have to help younger pupils. For example, at lunchtime, pupils of all ages enjoy chatting and eating at the table together, with older pupils proudly serving the food. Pupils have positive relationships with the staff. They are confident that staff prioritise their wellbeing and care about them as individuals. Leaders and staff are clear about their expectations of pupils' behaviour. They consistently model this to pupils. Pupils behave well in lessons. They benefit from learning in a calm and purposeful environment. Pupils are clear that they do not experience bullying and that this would be dealt with, if it occurred.

Leaders foster pupils' personal development through many enrichment opportunities. This includes guitar lessons, gymnastics coaching, and 'mindful Monday' sessions. Pupils enjoy being active at social times. They confidently navigate the wide range of climbing and play equipment. Pupils develop their interests and talents by participating in external sporting competitions and attending clubs, such as art club and 'Plumpton penpals'. Leaders ensure that there is equal opportunity for all pupils to access these experiences. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders ensure that obstacles to participation in school life are removed.

Leaders have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum. In the early years, this needs further refinement to ensure it is clear what teachers intend children to learn at each stage. Across the school, in some subjects, pupils do not develop the depth of understanding they need. Teachers' checks on pupils' understanding are not used effectively to inform subsequent teaching and to close gaps in pupils' knowledge. While leaders are taking action to improve this, governors do not robustly check that these actions are having the impact leaders intend.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment effectively, so that the implementation of the curriculum is consistently well matched to what pupils' need to know and addresses gaps in their understanding, so that they achieve well.
 - Leaders should ensure that the curriculum in the early years precisely defines what children should know and be able to do at each stage, so that they consistently build on their learning.
 - Governors should strengthen their oversight of the curriculum quality and impact, so that they are able to provide effective challenge and support to leaders.
 - Leaders should ensure that they continue to embed the personal development programme, so that pupils further deepen their knowledge of fundamental British values.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Mr Mark Halliburton.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors met with the headteacher, other leaders, governors and a representative from the local authority during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Mrs Sarah Penny

Lead inspector:

Liz Dayton, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Rachael Alarcon, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.



This data is from 24 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

101

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

105

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

6.67%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

1.98%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

9.90%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	47%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	45%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	47%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	68%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	64%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	75%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	67%	73%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	71%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	73%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	63%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	73%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	56%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	64%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	53%	73%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		46%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24		46%	
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		62%	

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24		62%	
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		59%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24		58%	
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		60%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24		59%	
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		68%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24		67%	
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24		80%	
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		78%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24		78%	
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24		79%	
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	3.6%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.8%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.3%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	7.4%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	6.8%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	20.8%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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