

Inspection of Lowick Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

30 Main Street, Lowick C of E First School, Lowick, Northumberland TD15 2UA

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Both Lowick and Holy Island first schools live out their vision of 'journeying together'. Both schools work together to provide pupils with the education and experiences that they need to be successful. Journeying together also means that all members of the community are accepted and celebrated. There are no limits to what pupils can achieve in their personal development. The schools use their relationship with each other and the local area incredibly well.

There is a remarkable sense of care and community throughout both schools. Pupils are polite and kind to each other. Older pupils sit with younger ones at snack time and talk to them to develop their vocabulary. Pupils respect each other and welcome new starters with warmth and understanding. Parents and carers know how well their pupils thrive in the family atmosphere that the schools have created.

Pupils benefit from the schools' rich curriculum. All staff are ambitious for what pupils can do. Pupils have detailed knowledge across a range of subjects and can talk about what they know. This is helped by the highly intelligent and detailed wider offer in the schools. Visitors and trips enhance what pupils know by providing them with examples and real-life experiences of what they have learned about.

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

The schools have developed a curriculum that focuses on what pupils both need to know and the language to talk about it. Leaders have made sure that there are 'way points' of knowledge that pupils need to reach in their journey through this curriculum. Staff ask pupils precise questions about what they can remember. Leaders have given careful thought to what pupils will go on to do in middle school. Pupils are ready for what comes next in their education.

The schools have mapped out what children in the early years should be able to do by the time they finish their Reception year. Staff teach children in Reception the important knowledge and skills that they need, so most are fully ready for Year 1. However, some of the way in which the schools teach younger children in the Nursery and two-year-old provision is less successful. Here, children are taught well in small groups but do not use their time as purposefully when learning independently. The resources currently in the early years do not support children to do this as well as they could.

Teachers know the pupils well. Teachers check what pupils can do and have understood in lessons. When needed, teachers then give some extra time to pupils who need an extra explanation or more practice. This additional support helps pupils to keep pace with the curriculum and not fall behind.

Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. All teachers lead on some aspects of the curriculum and have a strong understanding of the subjects that they lead. Leaders have used training from external providers well to enhance

their own knowledge. Teachers model what pupils need to do with expertise and emphasise how to use important vocabulary while doing it. There is occasionally a lack of consistency and precision in how teachers show pupils what to do in English and mathematics. Pupils are occasionally less clear on how to do something, such as reading words or solving calculations.

There is a clear focus on the importance of reading throughout the schools. The day begins with children enjoying reading their books. Teachers then read a 'big book' to their class to enjoy the stories and language in them. Staff use their accurate assessment of pupils' phonic knowledge to teach them the sounds that they need to read words. Pupils then get to practise this knowledge in books that contain the sounds and words that pupils can read.

The schools have taken effective action to improve the attendance of pupils. Staff are clear on the actions to take when pupils are absent. Staff know why pupils are not in school and work with families to prevent this. Attendance is much improved. This is also aided by how much pupils enjoy all that the schools have to offer and so want to come each day.

Staff are well trained to support pupils with specific needs. Where pupils need extra support, staff teach them in small groups to give them precisely what they need. Staff identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly. These pupils are then given teaching in lessons that closely matches their needs and any gaps in their learning. Pupils with SEND achieve well and feel successful in their daily experiences.

Pupils' development as people is exceptional. They are taught the importance of respect and helping others. They too understand the value of 'journeying together'. Pupils are incredibly polite to each other. Pupils have a real voice in the schools, the community and beyond. They relish the incredible extra-curricular offer. All children from the age of two are taken swimming. Pupils from all groups, including those with SEND, attend at least one club and many attend one every day. These clubs help them to develop their interests and pupils talk wide-eyed about all the opportunities it offers them. Even at such a young age, pupils are clear on what they can contribute to the world.

There is a wide range of knowledge and skills in the governing body. Governors are very well informed by leaders about what is happening in each school. They challenge this in their meetings. They come to each school to meet with specific staff to discuss how well improvement planning is getting on. This means that they can keep a strategic eye on how well each school is doing.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some of the resources in the early years environment are not as precisely matched to the curriculum as they need to be. Some younger children are not as purposeful in their independent learning as they need to be. The school should ensure that resources in the early years are matched clearly to learning intentions and that children use them meaningfully to practise important skills.
- Very occasionally, staff do not use clear methods to show pupils how to do tasks in English or mathematics. Some pupils are not building up automaticity in some tasks, such as blending words in phonics or calculating in mathematics. The schools should ensure that staff consistently use appropriate and high-quality pedagogical techniques relevant to each subject.

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	131221
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10316263
Type of school	First
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joan Montgomery
Headteacher	Rebecca Simpson
Website	www.lowickholyislandschools.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Lowick Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School is in a federation with Holy Island Church of England First School. Pupils are educated together with the pupils from Holy Island coming to Lowick when the tide allows them to cross over the causeway.
- There is a nursery with provision for two-year-olds in the school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection was on 17 May 2023 where it was judged to be good overall.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- This inspection was carried out at the same time as Holy Island Church of England First School. This is because these schools are in a hard federation and are taught together most of the time. Pupils from Holy Island join pupils at Lowick when the causeway across the sea is open and allows for travel. At other times, pupils are educated separately.
- Inspectors spoke to the headteacher, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority of Northumberland and the Diocese of Durham about their evaluation of the school and improvement planning.
- To evaluate the quality of education, inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and computing. 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.
- In addition to these deep dives, inspectors also looked at pupils' work in history, geography, science and English. Inspectors discussed the curriculum for history and how it had been mapped out.
- 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 looked at samples of pupils work from their personal, social and health education lessons and discussed the wider offer for pupils in the school with staff.
- Inspectors met with leaders about pupils with SEND and looked at how teachers were supporting these pupils.
- To gather the views of parents, inspectors spoke to parents at collection and drop off on both school sites and evaluated the responses to the online survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at attendance information that the school use to analyse how often pupils attend. Inspectors spent time outside and in the dining room during breaktimes and lunchtimes.

Inspection team

Matthew Knox, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Deborah Ashcroft

Ofsted Inspector

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