

Dallam School

Address: Haverflatts Lane, Milnthorpe, Cumbria, Cumbria, LA7 7DD

Unique reference number (URN): 137205

Inspection report: 28 April 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 have identified the improvement of attendance as a key priority for the school. The pastoral team provides effective support to improve pupils' attendance. Staff use data effectively to spot trends in absences. Leaders also develop positive relationships with the families whose children may have barriers to attendance. As a result, attendance is broadly in line with national averages. Where attendance is below average for specific groups of pupils, there is an improving trend.

Leaders have established high expectations for behaviour. They have focused on ensuring staff have a consistent approach to managing behaviour across the school. As a result, pupils typically behave well and engage in positive interactions with staff and their peers.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of pupils' barriers to positive behaviour. They make appropriate adaptations to remove those barriers. Staff have received training from an external partner on how to build effective relationships. As a result, there has been an increase in positive behaviour in the classroom. Although low-level disruption is rare, some pupils do not demonstrate positive attitudes towards their own learning.

Leaders use suspensions and exclusions appropriately. Bullying, including discriminatory language, harassment and abuse is dealt with swiftly and effectively.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Pupils are included and they feel part of the Dallam community. Leaders have the same curriculum ambitions for all pupils, regardless of their needs and barriers to learning.

Leaders identify and plan for pupils' additional needs as soon as they can, including before they have started at the school. This means that provision can be in place ready for when they start at the school. Teachers are also adept at recognising the emerging needs of pupils. Leaders ensure that external expertise is provided when appropriate. This approach enables leaders to have an in-depth knowledge of pupils' individual needs and how to support them as effectively as possible. Leaders share this valuable information with wider staff. This allows all staff to implement appropriate strategies in a timely manner. Leaders then monitor the progress of the pupils carefully so that they continually receive the support they need.

The school's use of pupil premium funding is well considered. Leaders' support for looked-after children is impressive. They ensure these vulnerable pupils have the academic and pastoral support they need. This support accelerates their progress.

Leaders' use of alternative provision is in the best interests of pupils with specific needs. It has a positive impact on their learning.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

There have been some significant changes in leadership recently with the appointment of new senior leaders. Leaders are supported by trustees who have a wealth of experience and expertise. Trustees are reflective and they support and challenge leaders appropriately. There is a clear and common understanding across all levels of leadership of the school's strengths and areas for development. Staff are aligned in their vision to drive forward the journey of school improvement. Leaders celebrate the improvements they have made at the school in recent years and have outlined clear priorities. They are reflective in their practice and are guided by external partners to ensure progress is sustained.

Staff appreciate the unity and clarity from leaders. They feel well supported. Leaders are role models in the school who are considerate of the workload and wellbeing of their colleagues. Professional development opportunities for staff are well matched to the strategic needs and priorities of the school. For example, leaders are trained by an external partner on effective leadership. Also, staff are trained on practices that help them build effective relationships and meet the needs of vulnerable pupils.

Leaders and trustees respond effectively to pupil voice. The school engages positively with a wide range of external agencies and partners. In particular, they are open to learning from others as well as willing to share good practice with local providers. For example, the school's library system is used as an example of effective practice with other local schools.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have recently revised the personal development programme, including the personal, social and health education curriculum. The programme is now given the same importance as other areas of the curriculum. Learning is coherent, age-appropriate and compliant with statutory duties for relationships, sex and health education. Leaders ensure the curriculum is responsive to local and national needs and risks. For example, there has been extensive teaching around misogyny and vaping. Elements of the curriculum are delivered through the weekly, whole-school 'Dallam together' assemblies. As a result, pupils are kept informed of relevant and current risks and how to keep themselves safe.

Leaders provide effective pastoral support to pupils. This includes access to a wide range of support from external providers for their mental health and wellbeing. Provision, such as the 'woodlands' area, is effective in supporting pupils with their welfare.

Pupils are offered an extensive range of extra-curricular activities and leadership opportunities. This helps them to develop their talents. Enrichment activities are focused on pupils' interests. They include sports, art, music, drama, debating and engineering clubs. Leaders analyse pupil engagement with extra-curricular activities. As a result, the school prioritises pupils who are not engaged to ensure that they benefit from all that the school has to offer. For example, some pupils are offered free music lessons, while others are prioritised for a cooking experience with a Michelin star chef.

The careers programme provides pupils with opportunities to experience local employers and colleges. Leaders ensure pupils develop their skills related to job applications. For example, they practise skills related to job interviews which set them up well for life after

school. Students in the sixth form undertake meaningful work experience. As a result, an increasing number of pupils transition into further education, employment or training.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders deliver a curriculum that is sequenced to help students develop their skills and knowledge. Students' learning builds on their prior knowledge. They use subject-specific terminology effectively in their learning. Although teaching is typically of a high standard, leaders are aware of some variation in the teaching of some curriculum areas and are addressing this. On the whole, students' achievement in national tests and examinations is improving. Their outcomes are broadly in line with the national average.

Students respond well to their teachers and engage in positive discussions with their peers. They are complimentary of the learning opportunities provided by the school. This creates a culture of positive collaboration and respect.

Leaders make appropriate adjustments for students with barriers to learning and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school uses additional funding, such as bursaries, effectively to reduce students' barriers to achievement.

In addition to their study programmes, students complete an additional enrichment course in a subject of their interest. Students also participate in local and national challenges such as the British Biology Olympiad. These experiences build students' confidence and self-esteem in preparation for life after school.

Leaders have implemented an effective careers programme in the sixth form. As a result, students successfully continue into their next stage of education, employment or training.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Not all pupils achieve as well as they should. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils and looked-after children is in line with similar groups nationally, but some pupils are capable of achieving better in national tests and examinations. This has been the case for some time in certain areas of the curriculum. Leaders have appropriate plans to address this.

Although the impact of the school's reading programme is evident, there are gaps in some pupils' accuracy in spelling and writing fluency. This contributes to an inconsistency in the quality of work that pupils produce.

Leaders have taken steps to ensure pupils are better prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training. The proportion of pupils remaining in sustained education continues to rise. An increasing number of pupils progress onto ambitious courses.

Leaders are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum. They monitor the impact of their actions closely. There are some inconsistencies in how well the curriculum is delivered. In the main, teachers have routines in place to help pupils recall and build their knowledge. For example, teachers start lessons with an activity that allows pupils to retrieve prior learning. However, this is not done as well in some lessons and some teachers do not check pupils' learning in a timely manner. As a result, teachers do not address gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly enough. Leaders are aware of this, but the impact of their work is not yet embedded across the whole curriculum.

Leaders have responded well to pupils with gaps in their reading. Well-designed reading interventions are having a positive impact. However, plans to support pupils with gaps in mathematics, handwriting and spelling are still in their early stages.

The curriculum is well sequenced and builds on prior learning. Teachers have the appropriate subject knowledge to deliver the curriculum. They generally make the required adaptations. This allows pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to access their learning.

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

Pupils are safe and happy at Dallam School. The school has a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Leaders encourage pupils to have a voice at the school. Pupils value the positive relationships with their teachers and pupils have a variety of methods to communicate their concerns to their trusted adults. Pupils are respectful towards staff and interact politely with their peers. Leaders deal with any bullying swiftly and effectively. This enables pupils to feel that they belong at the school as adults will listen to them.

Pupils' behaviour has improved over time as a result of effective, consistently applied routines. This means behaviour incidents are reducing.

Pupils with barriers to learning have their needs identified and supported effectively by staff. As a result, they achieve well. Staff also make adaptations to ensure all pupils have the chance to thrive in all areas of school life. For example, the school's 'woodlands' provision at break and lunchtime allows pupils to build positive relationships with others in a serene, purposeful environment.

Pupils' experiences of learning in the classroom are variable. In some lessons, choices of teaching methods mean pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Sometimes teachers do not check how well pupils are learning the curriculum. Although some pupils perform well in national tests and examinations, some groups of pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of trips and enrichment on offer to them. In particular, pupils reflect fondly on their residential visits. Leadership opportunities such as 'STEP', the school's peer reading scheme, allows pupils to build a sense of responsibility.

The careers guidance received by pupils supports them to continue to sustained education, employment or training after leaving school.

Next steps

- Leaders should improve the quality of teaching across the school by using assessment information effectively.
 - Leaders should closely monitor the achievement of pupils through the school so that pupils achieve the best outcomes.
 - Leaders should take appropriate action to ensure pupils secure their foundational knowledge in writing and mathematics.
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About this inspection

This school is part of South Westmorland Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is led by a board of trustees, chaired by Alan Gerrard.

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 spoke with the headteacher, trust leaders, other senior leaders in the school and staff. The lead inspector spoke with trustees, including the chair of the trust board, and the South Lakes Federation. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority.

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.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of one registered and 2 unregistered alternative providers.

Steven Henneberry: Headteacher

Lead inspector:

Usman Kothia, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Gil Bourgade, Ofsted Inspector

Christopher Beard, Ofsted Inspector

Aly Spencer, Ofsted Inspector

John Cowper, 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 28 April 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

878

Close to 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: 1,067

School capacity

1,150

Close to 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: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

14.88%

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: 28.9%

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

1.82%

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: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

12.07%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Close to 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

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	34.6%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	38.3%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	36.1%	45.3%	Close to average

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	44.1	46.1	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	43.7	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	46.1	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.43	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.27	-0.03	Close to average

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' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	22.7%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	20.0%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	21.4%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	40.5	34.9	Above
2023/24 (final)	29.4	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	41.3	35.0	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-1.24	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.69	-0.57	Close to average

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' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	22.7%	53.1%	-30.4 pp
2023/24 (final)	20.0%	53.1%	-33.1 pp
2022/23 (final)	21.4%	52.4%	-31.0 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	40.5	50.4	-9.9
2023/24 (final)	29.4	50.0	-20.6
2022/23 (final)	41.3	50.3	-9.0

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-1.24	0.16	-1.41
2022/23 (final)	-0.69	0.17	-0.86

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	96%	92%	Above
2022 leavers (revised)	93%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	93%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	31.91	35.00	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	25.81	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	29.13	34.16	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students’ progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	0.2	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	-0.3	0.0	Below

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 (3 term)	9.7%	8.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	10.1%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	10.2%	9.0%	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 (3 term)	25.3%	23.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	28.0%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	31.1%	26.5%	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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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