

Cartmel Priory CofE School

Address: Headless Cross, Cartmel, Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria, LA11 7SA

Unique reference number (URN): 137338

Inspection report: 19 May 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.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Promoting attendance is a priority for pupils and staff. Since leaders have raised the profile of attendance, pupils' attendance has rapidly increased. This is also the case for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Moreover, leaders' intensive support for pupils who have barriers to regular attendance has resulted in an uplift in their attendance. Accordingly, the attendance of all groups of pupils is above the national average.

Leaders have raised standards across school. Pupils respond positively to these expectations. This results in a calm, purposeful environment in lessons and allows pupils to learn without distractions. Pupils are respectful towards others during social time and follow routines without needing to be prompted. Leaders analyse data to identify trends. They respond by educating pupils on the risks of poor behaviour. Pupils with barriers to positive behaviour, including those with SEND, are supported with external agency involvement. This helps pupils to improve their behaviour. Leaders track bullying and other forms of discrimination and harassment. They respond to incidents swiftly and provide appropriate support to victims. As a result, incidents of this nature are not repeated.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have designed a personal development curriculum that is coherent and age-appropriate. The content meets statutory requirements and is responsive to local safeguarding risks. For example, external agencies deliver workshops on the dangers of knife crime. The personal development programme is devised in partnership with pupils and parents. It is also adapted to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils gain a detailed understanding of values such as democracy and tolerance. They learn how to be a good citizen and gain financial awareness. As a result of the curriculum, pupils secure the knowledge to make informed decisions. Therefore, pupils are prepared to thrive in modern day Britain.

Leaders ensure pupils receive valuable careers-related guidance. This includes engagement with local employers. The school prioritises disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, who receive personalised guidance from an adviser. This enables all pupils to pursue relevant career ambitions. All pupils progress to suitable education, employment or training.

Pupils have the opportunity to participate in a wide-ranging enrichment programme which is shaped by pupils. For example, robotics and other games clubs have been introduced following pupils' requests. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in a range of trips and visits. They include overnight residentials along with international experiences in Germany and Belgium. Leaders reduce pupils' barriers to engagement. As a result of these activities, pupils build resilience and confidence and learn about the wider world. Pupils also have a host of leadership opportunities. They include roles that require significant responsibility. For example, sports leaders host events for local primary schools and older pupils support their younger peers, reducing barriers in mathematics. Activities that promote leadership help pupils understand the importance of service.

Leaders respond with precision to pupils who require additional pastoral intervention. They work closely with external agencies to provide specialist support. This allows pupils to overcome personal barriers and remain integrated into school life.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils typically achieve well. This is reflected in their results in national examinations at the end of key stage 4. Pupils' success provides a foundation for them to progress to their next steps in education, employment or training. Where pupils' attainment in national examinations is not as successful in some areas of the curriculum, leaders have prioritised actions to improve outcomes.

Leaders' work on improving pupils' basic reading and mathematical skills is effective. As a result, pupils are able to access the curriculum. They can communicate their ideas in a coherent manner.

Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, generally achieve in line with their peers nationally across the curriculum. Their knowledge increases as they progress through the ambitious curriculum that leaders have designed.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of strengths and areas for improvement in the school. They have identified subjects that are not performing in line with other successful areas of the curriculum. Plans are in place to secure improvement in these areas. Where required, leaders welcome external expertise to provide support with school improvement.

Staff feel well supported by leaders. Leaders ensure staff at all levels have access to appropriate professional development. This increases their capacity to lead on areas of priority. For example, leaders have encouraged staff to lead on making improvements to the way teachers make checks on pupils' learning across the curriculum. Leaders make thoughtful decisions to manage the workload of staff. As a result, staff feel valued.

Governors and leaders are aligned in their vision for the school. There is a useful range of expertise in the governing body. They routinely audit their skills and performance to ensure they carry out their duties diligently. Governors access training and participate actively in school evaluation exercises. This allows governors to challenge and support leaders appropriately.

Leaders have created a culture where the school's influence permeates into the local community. They work closely with the diocese, the local authority and the local federation of schools. For example, the personal, social and health education lead contributes to the improvement of the subject across the federation. Leaders also host education conferences

and events on behalf of the local community. They maintain positive relationships with parents.

Needs attention

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders have established a curriculum that supports pupils to build on their existing knowledge. Staff are equipped with the subject knowledge required to deliver the curriculum. This ensures pupils have access to a suitable curriculum. However, leaders' work to ensure teachers check pupils' learning effectively is at an early stage. Although teachers' checks are effective in some subjects, this is not the case across the curriculum. Staff do not routinely identify and close gaps in knowledge and misunderstandings swiftly enough. In some subjects, leaders have not ensured that teachers apply the strategies recommended effectively to reduce barriers to learning. Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not access the curriculum as well as they should. Leaders have identified this as a priority for improvement.

Leaders identify gaps in pupils' reading knowledge and respond with effective interventions. Their actions to address pupils' weaknesses in reading and mathematical knowledge are embedded. Leaders also prioritise the closing of gaps in pupils' writing knowledge. As a result, more pupils are able to access the curriculum.

Despite weaknesses in teachers' checking of pupils' work and inconsistency in adaptations for pupils with SEND, pupils continue to achieve in line with their peers nationally.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

Although leaders take actions to identify and reduce pupils' barriers to learning, the impact of this work is inconsistent. Staff receive training on meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils. In particular, leaders have delivered training that allows staff to meet the needs of pupils who have suffered trauma. There has been a focus on using a range of strategies to ensure all pupils can access their learning. However, leaders have not ensured that staff make appropriate adaptations consistently well. In some areas of the curriculum, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not access their learning as well as their peers.

Leaders have detailed knowledge of pupils' needs and barriers. They have effective systems to identify pupils' emerging needs. When these needs are identified, a package of support is put in place. Leaders work extensively with parents when designing individual support plans.

Leaders have a sharp focus on the provision for pupils who are entitled to additional funding. Their actions enable these pupils to achieve well. Leaders' work with external agencies to support pupils known to social care is effective. Alternative provision is commissioned appropriately and is used in pupils' best interests.

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

Pupils are happy at Cartmel Priory School. All pupils belong as part of one family. They are thoughtful, polite and well-mannered. The school's culture emphasises the value of serving others. For example, older pupils support younger pupils with their learning. The close nature of the school means leaders know pupils' individual contexts and offer personalised support. As a result, pupils enjoy school and attend regularly.

Pupils enjoy learning. They have a voice in what is taught and how it is taught. Pupils learn in classrooms that are free from distractions. This allows pupils to achieve in line with their peers in national examinations. As a result, they progress to further education, employment or training. However, some pupils who find learning hard do not access the curriculum as well as they should. This is because staff do not reduce barriers consistently well.

Pupils are well-behaved. They thrive in an environment of mutual respect and positive relationships. Pupils follow routines, naturally creating an orderly atmosphere. Any bullying is dealt with quickly and effectively by leaders. Incidents are tracked closely. Leaders respond to any emerging trends. This approach ensures pupils are supported in a swift manner.

Pupils feel safe. They are able to approach trusted adults to share concerns. Leaders are informed of risks in the local area. They are proactive in educating pupils on how to protect themselves from danger. For example, pupils have been taught about the hazards of vaping. This ensures pupils make the right life choices.

Pupils help design the school's enrichment programme. They are provided with opportunities to take part in memorable experiences. From theatre trips to international excursions, pupils build their resilience and self-esteem. In particular, pupils are encouraged to engage with the school's outdoor learning programme. Pupils who have barriers to accessing extra-curricular activities are supported by leaders. This increases their participation.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff have the knowledge and expertise they need to employ strategies which reduce pupils' barriers to learning effectively and consistently across the curriculum.
- Leaders should ensure teachers use assessment consistently well across the curriculum so any gaps and misconceptions in pupils' knowledge are closed swiftly, and necessary adjustments can be made.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Judith Anne Peel.

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, other senior leaders and staff. The lead inspector spoke with representatives from the local authority, the diocese and the chief executive officer of the local federation. He also spoke with a group of governors that included the chair of the governing body. An inspector spoke with the virtual school head and representatives of the alternative providers that the school uses.

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 is registered as having a Christian religious character. It is part of the Diocese of Carlisle. The last section 48 inspection took place in February 2020.

The school makes use of 2 registered alternative provisions.

The school has undergone a significant change. The chair of the governing body has taken up her post since the previous inspection.

Headteacher: Sarah Beestone

Lead inspector:

Usman Kothia, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Christopher Beard, Ofsted Inspector

Zoe Enser, 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 19 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

354

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: 1,067

School capacity

380

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: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

15.25%

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

7.06%

Well above 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

9.60%

Below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

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

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)	37.7%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	45.1%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	56.4%	45.3%	Above

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)	47.2	46.1	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	46.4	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	52.0	46.3	Above

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)	-0.08	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	0.29	-0.03	Above

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)	9.1%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	20.0%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	33.3%	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)	39.8	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	41.8	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	39.5	35.0	Close to average

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)	-0.23	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	-0.77	-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)	9.1%	53.1%	-44.1 pp
2023/24 (final)	20.0%	53.1%	-33.1 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	33.3%	52.4%	-19.1 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)	39.8	50.4	-10.7
2023/24 (final)	41.8	50.0	-8.3
2022/23 (final)	39.5	50.3	-10.8

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)	-0.23	0.16	-0.40
2022/23 (final)	-0.77	0.17	-0.93

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%	Not available
2022 leavers (revised)	96%	93%	Not available
2021 leavers (revised)	95%	94%	Not available

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)	5.9%	8.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	7.9%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	9.6%	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)	14.2%	23.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	15.0%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	23.7%	26.5%	Close to average

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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