

# Inspection of Boltons CofE School

Bolton Low Houses, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 8PA

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Inspection dates: 3 and 4 June 2025

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are very proud to attend this welcoming school. They describe it as being 'like a family' and speak highly of the bonds they have with staff and each other. Pupils say that staff's positivity, in turn, makes them feel happy at school. They know that staff will listen and help them to resolve any worries that they have. The school is a calm place where pupils behave well. Pupils of all ages are highly respectful of each other and towards staff.

The school has high expectations of pupils' personal and academic achievement. Pupils achieve well and develop a broad body of knowledge. The school provides pupils with experiences that prepare them for life beyond school. Pupils visit locations of contrast to their local area, such as trips to cities, including London. They regularly go to the theatre and take part in outdoor experiences such as orienteering. Pupils develop their talents and interests through attending a range of clubs, including those for cooking, gardening and cricket.

Pupils develop their leadership skills and become positive citizens. They proudly take on roles in the school council and eco club. Here, they fundraise for charities, develop environmental initiatives and lead social events for people in the local community.

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

Staff quickly get to know pupils and build relationships with them and their families. Staff are vigilant at identifying pupils' individual needs, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They carefully consider how to adapt the delivery of the curriculum so that pupils with SEND are enabled to achieve well.

The school's curriculum is broad and ambitious. Leaders considered the mixed-age class structure when designing the curriculum to ensure that pupils' knowledge and skills build consistently over time. Staff typically design activities that match the intended key learning. However, at times, these activities do not enable pupils to make connections with prior learning and to apply this to new concepts. Consequently, some pupils' learning does not develop as securely and deeply as it could.

The school has developed effective systems to check how well pupils are progressing through the curriculum. This enables staff to accurately identify and address any misconceptions or gaps that occur in pupils' knowledge.

The school ensures that pupils read a diverse range of texts. Staff increase pupils' enthusiasm for books by recommending stories, which pupils subsequently enjoy reading. The school's phonics programme is firmly embedded and delivered well by staff. Pupils rapidly gain the knowledge and skills they need to confidently read age-appropriate books. The school ensures that any pupils who struggle to keep up with the reading programme are swiftly identified and supported effectively to catch up.

The school has identified the key vocabulary that it intends pupils to learn in each subject. It has recently put more focus on ensuring that pupils can understand, use and remember

these words. However, this is in its infancy. Some pupils struggle to remember subject-specific vocabulary. This makes it difficult for them to explain their thinking or to deepen their understanding.

Pupils behave well. They work hard in lessons and do not disrupt the learning of others. Children in the early years follow the established routines and become deeply engaged in their independent play-based learning. Staff support pupils to understand and to manage their emotions.

The school has high expectations of attendance and punctuality. It has taken effective action to improve pupils' rates of attendance over recent years. Staff work closely with parents and carers to understand the reasons for any absences. They offer support to families to remove any barriers to pupils' attendance.

The school's support for pupils' personal development and well-being is one of its key strengths. Pupils know that being active, getting fresh air and having positive friendships all contribute to maintaining their physical and mental health. The school celebrates diversity and broadens pupils' understanding of different cultures and religions. Staff introduce pupils to a range of careers, such as engineering and medical professions. Pupils have a chance to create and run a business through enterprise projects. These opportunities raise pupils' aspirations and prepare them well for their future.

There is a shared vision among governors, leaders and staff that drives the school's decision-making. The best interests of pupils sit at the heart of this vision. Governors meet their statutory responsibilities and carry out their roles effectively. Staff speak highly of the support they receive from leaders and from each other. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and its impact on their children's personal and academic achievements.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In some subjects, the learning activities that pupils complete do not consistently enable them to link and apply prior knowledge to new learning. This means that some pupils do not deepen their knowledge and skills as well as they could. The school should ensure that the curriculum delivery enables pupils to integrate new learning into their wider knowledge so that they develop a secure and deep understanding across all subjects.
- The school's approach to teaching subject-specific vocabulary is in its infancy and is not fully embedded. Some pupils struggle to remember key vocabulary, which means they cannot use these words to explain their thinking or to deepen their understanding. The

school should ensure that pupils consistently have opportunities to use and remember new vocabulary to support their learning across the curriculum.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	112245
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	10377950
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	81
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Mark Dawson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Amanda Pitcher
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.boltons.cumbria.sch.uk">www.boltons.cumbria.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	11 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is a voluntary controlled Church of England primary school and is part of the Diocese of Carlisle. Its last inspection under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 was in September 2023. The school's next section 48 inspection will take place by September 2028.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other leaders, governors, and staff at the school. The lead inspector spoke with representatives from the local authority and the Diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. 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. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaktime, lunchtime and when moving around the school.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and carers and considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors spoke to pupils and to staff to gather their views. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils and staff.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including those related to the governance of the school.

## **Inspection team**

Liz Dayton, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sue Bowman

Ofsted Inspector

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