

Inspection of Netherhall School

Netherhall Road, Maryport, Cumbria CA15 6NT

Inspection dates:	29 and 30 April 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Sixth-form provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, enjoy attending Netherhall School. They feel safe, happy and well supported. Pupils and students in the sixth form participate in an extensive range of activities, including sports events, residential outdoor education, overseas trips and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. They also benefit from visits to local museums, aquariums and theatres. Many pupils enthusiastically take on responsibilities, such as supporting younger pupils to read and raising donations for charity. Pupils also actively take part in musical performances, both in and outside of school.

Pupils form positive relationships with each other and staff. They behave well in lessons and during social times. Pupils value the guidance and support that they receive from staff. Sixth-form students serve as excellent role models for younger pupils.

Since the previous inspection, the school has raised its expectations for pupils' achievement. Pupils are beginning to benefit from revised curriculums in many subjects. However, there are weaknesses in how well some subject curriculums are delivered, including in the sixth form. As a result, some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and students in the sixth form, do not achieve as well as they should.

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

The school, together with staff, is taking positive steps to improve many aspects of its provision. For example, a range of strategies have been introduced to improve pupils' attendance. The school monitors attendance information carefully and works proactively with parents and carers to follow up on absences. This is leading to effective improvements in pupils' rates of attendance.

Pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read now have more opportunities to develop their reading skills than previously. Staff identify effectively any pupils who struggle with reading in Years 7 to 10. They make sure that these pupils receive extra support. This helps these pupils to catch up quickly. The school has made arrangements to assess Year 11 pupils and increase the support that they receive to improve their reading skills. Pupils experience increased opportunities to read for pleasure during the school day.

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum. The proportion of pupils taking the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is rising in Year 10 as more pupils choose to study foreign languages. The school has rightly reviewed and strengthened subject curriculums. In most subjects, the school has clearly identified the knowledge that pupils need to learn and the order in which it should be taught. Training for staff has been used well to build teachers' subject knowledge. However, some of these revised curriculums are still being embedded and have not had time to show impact. As a result, pupils and students in the sixth form do not achieve as well as they should.

Overall, staff have secure subject knowledge and design activities to help pupils to learn the curriculum. However, staff do not consistently choose the most appropriate activities to help pupils and students to learn the important knowledge securely. As a result, some pupils and students do not develop a deep enough understanding of subjects and do not achieve as well as they should.

The school has not ensured that staff check pupils' understanding well enough. This means that sometimes staff do not know when pupils have gaps in their knowledge or whether they remember their learning over time. Consequently, pupils sometimes move on to new learning before they are secure in their previous learning. This hampers them from building on what they know and can do already.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with SEND promptly and shares this information with staff. Staff generally use this information effectively to adapt how they teach the curriculum for pupils with SEND. Where this is not the case, pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils rise to the school's high expectations of their behaviour. They follow the school's clear routines and procedures most of the time. This enables staff to teach without disruptions. Staff training has been used effectively to ensure a consistent approach to behaviour management. Pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour benefit from appropriate support.

Pupils and students receive age-appropriate information about healthy relationships. They also learn how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. Pupils enjoy learning about different faiths and cultures. This helps them to become respectful and tolerant of others. Careers education is of a high-quality. Year 10 pupils and Year 12 students undertake meaningful work experience. This enables them to develop their employability skills and to make informed decisions about their future, including about apprenticeships.

Staff are proud to work at the school. Staff, including those new to the profession, feel that the school is considerate of their well-being and workload. Governors are committed to the school and want the best for staff and pupils. While some governors ask appropriate questions about aspects of the school's work, others lack a secure understanding of important information. This limits their ability to hold the school fully to account and improve it further.

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 revised curriculums are not fully embedded. As a result, pupils sometimes have gaps in their prior learning, and this affects how well they learn new

content. The school should ensure that the revised subject curriculums are implemented effectively so that pupils' knowledge is secure, and they achieve as well as they should.

- Staff do not consistently choose the most appropriate activities to deliver the intended curriculum effectively. This means that some pupils and students in the sixth form, including those with SEND, do not deepen their learning. The school should continue to provide staff with the support and development needed to deliver the intended curriculums well.
- Some staff do not use assessment strategies consistently well enough to check whether pupils and students have understood their learning. As a result, pupils move on to new content and do not secure previous learning well. The school should continue with its work to ensure that staff identify and address key gaps in learning before introducing new content, so that pupils and students build on their previous knowledge over time.
- At times, governors do not challenge the school effectively. This means that governors do not have a precise understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The school should ensure that governors receive appropriate support so they can fulfil their strategic role effectively and contribute effectively to the school's improvement.

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	112382
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10321351
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	870
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Neil Watt
Headteacher	David Tromans
Website	www.netherhall.cumbria.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 March 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been many changes in subject leadership and staffing at the school.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.
- 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.

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 (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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and some staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the governing body. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority. An inspector spoke with a representative of an alternative provision that the school uses.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation documents and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages and computing. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils and students about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. They looked at samples of pupils' work in these subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences in school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes. Inspectors also took account of the views expressed by pupils in Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. An inspector also met with some parents at their request.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Chris Meldrum	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Ruddy	Ofsted Inspector
Scott Maclean	Ofsted Inspector

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