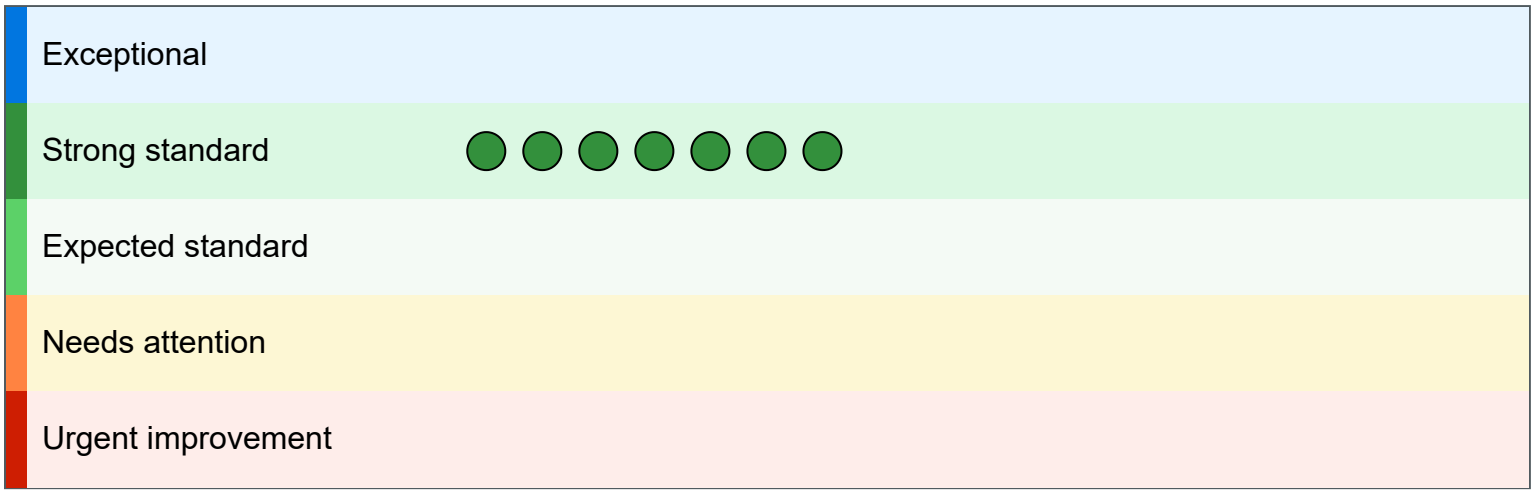
Kirkby Stephen Primary School

Address: Nateby Road, Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria, CA17 4AE

Unique reference number (URN): 112180

Inspection report: 14 July 2026



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

Achievement

Strong standard

Pupils achieve extremely well across the curriculum. They thrive in their academic studies so that they are fully prepared for each stage of their education. They build securely on their starting points, developing the knowledge, skills and understanding intended by the highly ambitious curriculum. Over time, pupils become increasingly confident, independent and resilient learners who are able to apply their learning across the subjects that they study.

Pupils develop secure foundations in communication and language, reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receive the expert help that they need to catch up quickly with any gaps that they may have in their learning.

Disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND, and those facing additional barriers to learning achieve very well. This is because staff hold high aspirations for all pupils and provide support that is carefully matched to their needs.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard

Leaders have created a culture of high expectations. Pupils benefit from kind and highly supportive relationships with staff. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' attendance. Pupils develop the attitudes, confidence and sense of belonging to flourish both academically and personally.

Leaders ensure that attendance is a high priority. Robust systems enable staff to identify patterns quickly and provide timely support when attendance concerns emerge. Leaders work closely with families, external agencies and support services to reduce barriers to attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those facing other barriers to learning. As a result, pupils remain engaged with learning and attendance remains above national expectations.

The school’s approach to behaviour is consistent and enables pupils to make sensible choices about their conduct. Staff model respectful relationships and create an environment where pupils take responsibility for their actions and contribute positively to school life. Throughout the school, pupils benefit from a calm and nurturing environment. They enjoy positive relationships with staff and peers. They understand what is expected of them and are supported to attend regularly, behave responsibly and achieve their best.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, enjoy learning in classrooms where they are encouraged to think, discuss and challenge themselves. They take pride in their work and display a genuine enthusiasm for their learning. Pupils routinely develop the knowledge, skills and confidence needed for future success. Relationships between staff and pupils create an environment where pupils are supported to achieve their best.

Across the curriculum, pupils benefit from a strong emphasis on vocabulary development, discussion, writing and reasoning. They communicate their ideas with confidence and sophistication and apply their knowledge effectively across different subjects. Learning environments are purposeful and supportive, enabling pupils to develop concentration, independence and positive learning behaviours.

Leaders make checks on the quality of the curriculum with rigour. They use information from these checks to make improvements to ensure that the curriculum and teaching continues to meet the different needs that pupils may have.

Pupils experience a broad, ambitious, and well-sequenced curriculum that is delivered through consistently effective teaching. They develop secure knowledge, strong communication skills and positive attitudes to learning. This enables all groups of pupils to achieve well.

Early years

Strong standard

Leaders have established a highly effective early years provision that gives children the best possible start to their education. The curriculum is ambitious, carefully sequenced and rooted in a secure understanding of child development. Staff know children extremely well and create a nurturing, stimulating and purposeful learning environment where children feel safe, valued, and confident to explore. Warm and trusting relationships underpin the provision. This enables children to develop a strong sense of belonging and engage positively in their learning.

Children in the early years are curious, motivated, and enthusiastic learners. They cooperate well with each other and demonstrate high levels of independence. The indoor and outdoor environments provide rich opportunities for exploration, investigation and problem-solving. This enables children to secure a deep understanding across all areas of learning.

Staff prioritise the development of children's communication and language skills. As a result, children develop the confidence to articulate their ideas clearly and build vocabulary needed to access future learning with success.

Well-established routines support children to become independent, resilient, and responsible learners. Children behave with care and kindness towards each other. They respond well to the high expectations that staff have for all aspects of their development. Across early years, children benefit from the high-quality interactions that they have with staff. Children routinely make a smooth transition to Year 1.

Inclusion

Strong standard

Leaders have created an equitable and inclusive environment where barriers to learning for all pupils are reduced effectively. They ensure that all pupils participate in the many opportunities that the school provides. This enables pupils to thrive academically, socially and emotionally. The school has a culture where every pupil is known, valued and supported to succeed.

Staff work closely with families, external professionals and specialist agencies to ensure their provision meets pupils changing needs. Leaders review support regularly and use evidence carefully to evaluate its impact. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make strong progress from their starting points.

Pupils with additional needs access a broad and ambitious curriculum and participate fully in all aspects of school life. They develop confidence, resilience and a strong sense of belonging within the school community.

Leaders ensure that resources, including pupil premium funding, are targeted effectively. They monitor attendance, participation and achievement closely to ensure that the barriers that some pupils may face are removed. Consequently, pupils can engage successfully in learning and wider school experiences. Pupils participate in lessons with confidence. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful, supportive and characterised by a shared commitment to success.

Regardless of need or background, pupils are extremely well supported to achieve well, to develop independence and contribute positively to their school community.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

Pupils attend a school where expectations are high. Staff work together to ensure that all pupils experience success. Pupils benefit from an inclusive, ambitious and nurturing environment in which they feel valued, supported and encouraged to achieve their best.

Leaders, including governors, have a detailed and secure understanding of the school's performance. Leaders foster a culture of collaboration, reflection and professional growth. Leaders and staff work extremely well together to make improvements at the school and make decisions that are in the very best interests of pupils. Leaders invest heavily in staff development. They ensure that pupils experience a high-quality education and are well supported to thrive in all aspects of school life.

Governors hold a clear strategic vision for the school. They are committed to ongoing improvements and they provide effective challenge and support that helps to secure the best outcomes for pupils.

Staff are rightly positive about the support that they receive from leaders. They value leaders' commitment to their professional learning, workload and wellbeing. Leaders invest effectively in developing staff expertise, creating a skilled and motivated workforce that is united in its commitment to delivering the very best opportunities and experiences for all pupils.

Leaders work closely with parents and carers who hold the school in high regard. Leaders make the most of opportunities to connect with the local community and ensure that these enhance the experiences of pupils.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

The school's approach to personal, social, health and economic education and relationships and sex education is is thoughtfully planned and delivered. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those that are disadvantaged, develop an age-appropriate understanding of healthy and respectful relationships, equality, diversity and protected characteristics. They learn to value the differences that may exist between people. They recognise the importance of including others and develop the knowledge and understanding needed to contribute positively to society.

Pupils benefit from a rich and carefully planned programme of personal development that promotes confidence, wellbeing, responsibility and respect for others. Staff ensure that pupils develop their understanding of fundamental British Values. Pupils actively participate in a broad and well-designed range of experiences that develop their character, aspirations and understanding of the world around them. They are well prepared for future education and life beyond school.

Pupils have a secure understanding of how to maintain their physical health, emotional wellbeing and personal safety. Effective pastoral support ensures that pupils feel safe, supported and cared for. Staff take the time to listen to pupils and to respond appropriately to their needs. Pupils develop a strong sense of belonging at the school.

Pupils benefit from enrichment activities, leadership roles, educational visits, community projects, sports and arts provision. These experiences broaden pupils' horizons and help them to discover new talents and develop new ones.

Leaders provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to make a positive contribution to both the school and the wider community. Pupils embrace these opportunities enthusiastically and demonstrate increasing responsibility, maturity and independence. Careers-related experiences and engagement with local employers help pupils understand future pathways and the opportunities available to them both locally and beyond.

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

Pupils are proud to be part of Kirkby Stephen Primary School. They attend a school where they are safe, valued and included. Warm and respectful relationships between pupils and staff create a deep sense of belonging. Pupils know that staff care about them and will help them if they have any concerns.

Pupils enjoy learning and engage with enthusiasm with the school’s ambitious curriculum. They develop secure knowledge and skills across a broad range of subjects. They learn to think deeply, challenge themselves and take pride in their achievements. Reading, communication and language are given high priority. This helps pupils to become confident and successful learners.

Pupils benefit from a calm and purposeful environment. They behave well, show consideration for others and develop independence and resilience. They understand the expectations that the school has of them. Pupils contribute positively to the daily life in

school. They benefit from a range of opportunities beyond the classroom, including sports, the arts, leadership roles, educational visits and residential experiences. These opportunities help pupils to develop confidence and to discover new interests. Pupils make a meaningful contribution to the wider community.

Staff know pupils and their families extremely well. They provide pupils with support promptly when needed. This helps pupils to access learning with success and to overcome any barriers that they may face. Pupils appreciate the care and encouragement they receive and speak positively about the support available to them.

Children in the early years get off to a strong start. They learn in a nurturing environment where they are encouraged to explore, communicate and develop confidence as learners.

By the time pupils leave the school, they are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education. They are confident, respectful and responsible young people who understand the importance of working together and making a difference to others. Bullying is rare and staff are quick to deal with any cases that may occur.

Next steps

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure continued improvement to their curriculum implementation to achieve and sustain exceptional standards of teaching which has a transformational impact on the achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who may be disadvantaged.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Mrs Andrea Dixon.

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, the two vice chairs of governors, other governors, pupils, staff, parents and carers.

The inspector confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Alison Capstick

Lead inspector:
Jacqui Wilson, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Sarah Price, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from different sources. More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 14 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

196
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: 272

School capacity

256
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: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

20.23%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 26.3%

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

2.04%

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: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

8.67%

Below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above 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

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	73%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	77%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	71%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	73%	60%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	83%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	85%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	83%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	81%	73%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	79%	72%	Above
2024/25 (final)	81%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	77%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	81%	71%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	92%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	92%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	92%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	92%	73%	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 reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	41%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	43%	47%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	36%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	55%	62%	Below
2024/25 (final)	57%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	55%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	45%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	43%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	45%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	77%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	71%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	82%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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 reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	41%	68%	-27 pp
2024/25 (final)	43%	69%	-26 pp
2023/24 (final)	36%	67%	-31 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	55%	80%	-25 pp
2024/25 (final)	57%	81%	-24 pp
2023/24 (final)	55%	80%	-25 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	45%	78%	-32 pp
2024/25 (final)	43%	78%	-35 pp
2023/24 (final)	45%	78%	-32 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	77%	80%	-2 pp
2024/25 (final)	71%	81%	-9 pp
2023/24 (final)	82%	79%	2 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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)	3.6%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.0%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.4%	5.9%	Below

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)	6.3%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	6.9%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	10.5%	16.2%	Below

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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