

Caldew School

Address: Dalston, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA5 7NN

Unique reference number (URN): 137254

Inspection report: 22 September 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

Achievement

Expected standard 

Published data at the end of Year 11 indicates that pupils' attainment is in line with national averages in recent years. Most pupils progress well through the curriculum.

Disadvantaged pupils attain well across a range of subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those in the specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, typically attain well.

Pupils typically develop appropriate knowledge and skills across the curriculum. They are generally able to recall and apply prior learning effectively. Most pupils produce work that is of a high standard and well presented.

In the sixth form, over time, students attain broadly in line with national expectations in both academic and vocational subjects.

Pupils are well supported by trained staff to help them develop essential knowledge and skills in reading and mathematics. Overall, pupils leave the school well prepared for their next steps in education.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders carefully track and monitor the impact of the strategies around pupils' attendance. Overall attendance is broadly in line with national averages. The attendance of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) was above national averages last year. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is improving and was also in line with national averages last year. However, persistent absence is a barrier for some disadvantaged pupils. This limits their success.

The school typically has a calm and orderly atmosphere. Bullying and derogatory language are uncommon and pupils trust staff to deal with concerns quickly and effectively. Pupils generally behave well and are polite and respectful to others. This is because leaders' high expectations and clear routines are clearly understood and well established across the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are a strength. In lessons, pupils are engaged and focused on learning. During social times, pupils enjoy each other's company, including through playing sports. Most pupils manage their behaviour well with only limited adult support.

Leaders make appropriate adaptations, including for pupils with SEND, to help them manage their own behaviour. This includes designated spaces that provide individual guidance to help pupils with their wellbeing and emotional regulation.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate and informed understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching. Leaders ensure a broad and ambitious curriculum offer. Leaders refine this as needed in response to pupils' interests.

Subject curriculums are well designed. They support pupils to build on what they have learned previously. The curriculum is generally delivered well. Teachers have a detailed knowledge of the subjects they teach. Regular training is improving the consistency of teaching. Leaders ensure that pupils with identified needs, including pupils in the specialist resource provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, receive effective support.

In the main, teachers use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding and address misconceptions. This enables teachers to probe pupils' thinking and address gaps in knowledge. Staff identify and address gaps in pupils' reading and numeracy skills effectively. Pupils have many opportunities to read and develop their fluency and confidence. Work is under way to strengthen handwriting support across the school.

Activities are generally appropriate and adapted in response to pupils' answers and needs. This includes using writing prompts and appropriate technology. This enables pupils to access learning successfully and develop knowledge and skills in line with expectations. However, occasionally there is variability in the quality of teaching. For example, sometimes teaching strategies are not adapted well enough to deepen pupils' learning.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders are deeply committed to supporting vulnerable pupils. Leaders identify pupils' needs quickly and accurately. Staff are well informed about pupils' needs through established information-sharing systems and professional learning. Pupils generally receive effective interventions, including for phonics and reading where necessary. This helps them to successfully access learning across the curriculum. Staff typically adapt support appropriately for pupils, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This enables them to access the same learning as others and progress well from their starting points.

The school's specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (specially resourced provision) provides targeted support for pupils. This helps them to move confidently between the specialist and mainstream classes. Pupils in the specialist resource provision join lessons and fully take part in school life.

Leaders engage closely with pupils, families and external agencies. Support for pupils known to children's social care is a notable strength. Leaders regularly review provision for these pupils and adapt them to meet individuals' needs.

Leaders have ensured that additional funding is used appropriately to overcome any barriers for disadvantaged pupils. This has contributed to improvements seen in their attainment. Alternative provision is used appropriately. Leaders have a clear oversight of pupils' education, welfare and engagement.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders provide an inclusive environment for pupils. Leaders have a crystal-clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school. They have taken

strategic action to enhance the curriculum offer available for pupils to make a positive difference to their future opportunities.

Trustees have a shared ambitious vision for the school. They use their expertise skilfully to assure themselves of what is happening. Trustees ensure that statutory duties are met. They ask probing questions and provide helpful support to leaders. Together with leaders, trustees act in the best interests of pupils.

Staff morale is high. Staff, including teachers in the early stages of their careers, are highly appreciative of the guidance that leaders provide. Leaders have established professional learning opportunities that are supporting staff to further develop and embed their teaching practice. Staff value the time that they receive to be involved in coaching programmes and subject-specific training. Leaders are alert to staff workload and take steps to protect staff wellbeing.

Leaders have established highly productive links with local employers. For example, partnerships with businesses enhance opportunities for pupils' personal development. For example, by running aspirational programmes that open doors to opportunities for the future of pupils and students across the whole school.

Leaders work closely with parents, carers and external agencies to secure support for pupils, including those who are vulnerable. This has resulted in pupils typically engaging well in activities and making the most of their time at the school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school provides a personal development programme that promotes pupils' wider development well. Through the 'learning for life' programme, pupils learn about being safe in the community, including road safety, water safety and knife crime. Pupils have a secure knowledge of online risks, such as the dangers of sharing personal information.

Pupils with additional needs are supported to access the personal development curriculum. These include engaging successfully in lessons, school trips and participating in Cumberland Wrestlers competitions.

Pupils respect people's differences. They are taught about cultural diversity. Many pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of different faiths and beliefs. This develops their tolerance and understanding. Pupils learn about what is right and wrong and how democracy applies in the school. However, pupils are less confident about some other aspects of fundamental British values. Their understanding of the characteristics of people protected in law is not as well developed as it could be.

The school provides a broad range of opportunities that enhance pupils' experiences beyond the classroom. Pupils speak positively about enrichment opportunities, including music, darts and sign language clubs. They value the range of educational and reward trips available. Pupils are taught how to debate. This has led to the formation of a flourishing debating club. This contributes to developing pupils' confidence and speaking skills.

Careers education is of a high quality. Leaders provide enhanced advice and additional support for pupils who face barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing. Pupils become

increasingly aware of the world of work as they move through the school. Pupils benefit from participating in work-related learning. They engage with employers, universities and apprenticeship providers. These opportunities raise their ambitions and widen their horizons.

Pupils value the tailored pastoral support that they receive from staff. This includes support for their social, emotional and mental health. Pupils are confident in accessing this when they need it.

Post-16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders have established an inclusive sixth-form provision in which students with a wide range of starting points successfully move on to appropriate education, employment or training. The sixth form curriculum provides an appropriate balance of academic and vocational pathways.

The progress that students make is typically in line with national averages. Leaders are aware that attainment outcomes have varied between subjects and qualification types. Leaders have implemented supportive actions where improvement is required. These include subject-specific development. Teachers generally use purposeful questioning to check students' understanding and develop their learning. Students are typically able to recall prior learning securely and apply knowledge to unfamiliar contexts.

Students enjoy taking on leadership roles, including the school council, charity fundraising and supporting younger pupils in their lessons. Students develop appropriate knowledge and understanding of online safety, healthy relationships and wider safeguarding themes.

Careers information, advice and guidance are a particular strength. Students learn about the world of work through an extensive programme, including employer visits, work experience and alumni contributions. These help students to make informed choices about their futures. Students who face significant social, emotional and mental health challenges receive support to overcome their barriers to learning. This helps them to progress successfully to education, employment or training after sixth form.

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

Pupils enjoy coming to this inclusive, friendly and caring school. They feel safe here. Pupils feel part of a community where staff get to know them quickly. This contributes to their sense of belonging. Pupils who may have any barriers to learning or wellbeing receive effective support. This enables pupils to engage in their learning. Most pupils attend school regularly.

Pupils rise to leaders' high expectations of behaviour. Pupils typically get along with each other. They follow well-established routines which allow lessons to typically proceed with little interruption. Students in the sixth form are excellent role models and are mature in their approach to their studies. Bullying is dealt with effectively and in a timely manner.

Pupils follow an ambitious curriculum. Typically, they attain in line with their peers in national examinations. They show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils leave well prepared for the

next stage of their education.

Pupils' views are valued. For example, because of requests made through the school council, a girls' rugby club has been successfully established. Older pupils enjoy taking on leadership roles, including fundraising for charity and volunteering.

Pupils benefit from a broad range of experiences that enable them to develop their talents and interests. They are proud to represent the school at music concerts held in Carlisle. Pupils like being able to compete in local and regional sports tournaments. Participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award develops their confidence and resilience. Pupils spoke positively about a range of clubs including chess, manga, music and equine. Trips to local and international cities and visits to museums deepen pupils' understanding of the world around them. Leaders remove barriers to participation so that all pupils can be included.

Pupils and students take part in meaningful work experience and receive helpful guidance about employment and apprenticeships. This raises their aspirations and informs their future options.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue their work to secure greater consistency in the quality of work. In particular, by ensuring that pupils and students are given more opportunities to deepen their knowledge and understanding across the curriculum.
 - Leaders should build on the improvements to further reduce persistent absence among disadvantaged pupils.
 - Leaders should deepen pupils' knowledge of fundamental British values and of protected characteristics so that they can speak more knowledgeably about these aspects of modern Britain.
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About this inspection

This school is a single-academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The headteacher also acts as the chief executive officer of the trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jennie Wilkinson.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This inspection took place on 22 and 23 September 2026.

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 school leaders, staff and trust leaders during the inspection. The lead inspector spoke with trustees and governors, including the chair. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority. Inspectors

spoke with a virtual school headteacher and a representative of the alternative provider 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 provides a specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The provision supports up to 10 pupils with autism.

The school makes use of 2 unregistered alternative providers.

Headteacher : Victoria Jackson

Lead inspector:

Ahmed Marikar, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Linda Griffiths, Ofsted Inspector

Scott Maclean, Ofsted Inspector

Catherine Sloan, 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 22 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

990

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: 1,063

School capacity

1,050

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)

19.66%

Below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 30.4%

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

6.46%

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: 3.53%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

14.95%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 14.0%

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)

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)	38.7%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	38.6%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	38.4%	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)	44.3	46.1	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	42.4	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	45.1	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)	-0.19	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.10	-0.03	Close to average
2021/22 (final)	-0.19	-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)	17.6%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	13.3%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	20.0%	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)	35.9	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	30.1	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	32.5	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)	-0.73	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.55	-0.57	Close to average
2021/22 (final)	-0.39	-0.55	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)	17.6%	53.1%	-35.5 pp
2023/24 (final)	13.3%	53.1%	-39.8 pp
2022/23 (final)	20.0%	52.4%	-32.4 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)	35.9	50.4	-14.5
2023/24 (final)	30.1	50.0	-19.9
2022/23 (final)	32.5	50.3	-17.8

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)	-0.73	0.16	-0.89
2022/23 (final)	-0.55	0.17	-0.72
2021/22 (final)	-0.39	0.15	-0.54

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)	95%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	98%	93%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national 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)	26.24	35.00	Below
2023/24 (final)	26.77	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	33.69	34.16	Close to average

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)	-0.1	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)	8.7%	8.4%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (3 term)	9.7%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	8.9%	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)	25.2%	23.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	29.2%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	31.2%	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.

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