

The Queen Katherine School

Address: Appleby Road, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 6PJ

Unique reference number (URN): 136526

Inspection report: 6 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 ●

Leaders and staff consistently promote the importance of attendance. They have created an environment where pupils enjoy coming to school. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, attend school regularly. Leaders' swift actions to improve the rates of attendance for disadvantaged pupils are bearing fruit. Leaders intervene early to provide pupils with proactive support to identify any barriers to attendance, before they escalate. Rates of persistent absence are lower than the national average.

Leaders have developed a culture and ethos that is highly conducive to learning. Pupils meet leaders' high expectations consistently. Pupils embody the school's values and wear their school uniform proudly. Around school, pupils are friendly, well mannered and respectful. They talk animatedly about their school and confidently show pride in their school community. In lessons, pupils behave consistently well. They work hard and concentrate on their learning. Leaders offer well considered and effective support for pupils who struggle to manage their emotions.

Leaders have clear oversight of behaviour trends. They use the information they collect in order to be proactive and address behaviour incidents effectively, including bullying and discrimination. Bullying is uncommon and is addressed robustly when it occurs. Suspensions are used minimally.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

The school's ethos and vision are firmly rooted in inclusion. Pupils' individual needs are identified quickly and accurately. Leaders use a wealth of information and draw on specialist expertise to build an early and regularly reviewed picture of pupils' needs. They make sure that staff have access to high-quality training. Staff make adaptations and adjustments that enable pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face other barriers to experience success at school. Leaders evaluate the impact of the support that pupils receive meticulously, making nimble changes when needed.

Leaders engage with parents and carers, as well as other professionals effectively. Pupils who are supported by a social worker, or who face other challenges in their lives, receive a range of effective emotional and academic support. This includes, for example, help with communication, Lego therapy and targeted provision to support pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs.

Disadvantaged pupils thrive here. Leaders make sure their use of additional funding has a positive impact on pupils who need it. Every effort is made to make sure all pupils benefit from a rich variety of enrichment opportunities. Leaders make thoughtful use of alternative provision. It is used only when it is in pupils' best interests.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leaders at all levels make decisions in the best interests of pupils. They have brought about highly effective and lasting improvements. Since joining the trust, school leaders have continued to act with purpose and high ambition. They have rightly taken robust action to ensure that teaching is consistently high quality, to raise students' achievements in the sixth form and to improve pupils' reading skills. Leaders reflect carefully on their work and seek the objective views of other professionals to inform their next steps.

Leaders know the school extremely well and have identified the right improvement priorities. These are known and understood by all, including governors and trustees who use their expertise and experience well to support leaders. They challenge leaders' evaluations appropriately and hold leaders to account with precision for the achievement and wellbeing of pupils. Leaders demonstrate their strong belief that Queen Katherine School should enable pupils to flourish academically and personally as compassionate, responsible individuals.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They value how leaders have invested in them and given them agency to support leaders' vision. They value working collaboratively with peers across the trust to drive school improvement. Staff appreciate the provision for their professional learning and individual coaching. They enjoy sharing effective practice with colleagues and rehearsing pedagogical approaches to get it right for pupils. Teachers at the beginning of their career benefit from the excellent support that they receive. Leaders take staff wellbeing seriously and adjust workload when needed. This is reflected in the high morale of staff.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

Developing pupils' character, personal values and broadening their horizons is at the heart of the school. Leaders' commitment to this is evident. They have designed an extensive, well considered and responsive personal development programme that prepares pupils across all key stages for life in modern Britain. Pupils benefit from rich and varied opportunities. For example, pupils speak excitedly about experiences such as residential trips to Scotland, meeting with local artists and a planned visit to the CERN physics laboratory in Switzerland. Many pupils participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Pupils gain a detailed knowledge of tolerance, diversity and respect. They actively value and celebrate difference. Through their learning about fundamental British values, pupils show a mature understanding of important concepts, such as democracy and equality. Leaders ensure that pupils learn these concepts thoroughly. For example, the taught curriculum is supplemented by assemblies, tutor time and activities designed to help pupils absorb key learning. These experiences help pupils make these values their own.

Pupils are proud to contribute to the wider life of the school. The leadership roles pupils carry out help shape school decisions. Pupils participate positively as active citizens to their local community. For example, pupils grow their own vegetables and produce hanging baskets that are sold locally to raise funds for charitable causes.

Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and interests. These include in the arts and many different sports. Clubs such as strategy board games and public speaking help develop pupils' confidence and resilience. Leaders remove any barriers to joining in so that all pupils can make the most of these opportunities, including disadvantaged pupils.

Across all key stages, pupils benefit from comprehensive careers information and guidance. This includes work experience and the opportunity to meet employers and education providers. Pupils are well informed about their next steps in education, employment or training.

Post 16 provision

Strong standard ●

The school offers students a range of academic and vocational courses that support their future career goals. There is a particularly broad and ambitious range of A-Level courses for students to choose from. Sixth-form teachers use their subject expertise to deliver the curriculum consistently well. They explain new learning clearly and logically. Teachers systematically question students to probe their understanding of complex topics and support them to provide extended answers.

Students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, achieve at least in line with or better than national averages in public examinations. In class, they produce high-quality work and make insightful contributions. Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and priorities in the sixth form. Their swift and sharply focused actions are improving the progress some students make in a small number of subjects. Students are committed to their learning and attend regularly. They make the most of the vast enrichment offer open to them.

Students have high aspirations. Leaders ensure that students are well informed about the options available to them after leaving the sixth form. The advice and guidance students receive is highly effective. They leave Queen Katherine having achieved well, with firm plans in place for their future.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Pupils typically build their knowledge effectively across the curriculum. Results from public examinations at the end of key stage 4, including for disadvantaged pupils, are consistently at or above national averages. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also typically achieve well. Students in the sixth form achieve at least in line with or better than their peers nationally, particularly in vocational qualifications. Almost all pupils in Year 11 and students in the sixth form progress to appropriate destinations where they successfully continue their education or training.

Typically, pupils develop appropriate foundational knowledge, for example in literacy and numeracy. There is a broad range of support for those pupils who need it. This enables them

to catch up. For example, effective support increases pupils' ability to read accurately and fluently. Leaders ensure that pupils who find learning more difficult receive additional help so that they are prepared well for their next steps.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have a precise understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching. They know and prioritise where further development is needed. For example, targeted actions have strengthened learning in English, history and in the sixth form. Additionally, leaders' introduction of an agreed teaching model is improving consistency in the delivery of the curriculum across subjects.

Pupils study a varied curriculum. Sixth-form students have a suitable choice of academic and vocational courses. Across key stages, what pupils are expected to learn is clearly defined, logically ordered and builds progressively over time.

Teachers know the barriers to learning that some pupils face. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported to access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. For example, teachers make adjustments and provide resources so that pupils understand concepts fully. They encourage all pupils to rehearse subject-specific vocabulary by sharing ideas with peers. However, the ways some teachers identify misconceptions or address gaps in knowledge is sometimes inconsistent. This means that errors in reading, handwriting, punctuation and spelling occasionally go unnoticed. At times, this hampers some pupils from learning as securely and deeply as they could.

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

This is a school where pupils, including students in the sixth form, are inspired to be successful in all that they do. The school successfully encourages pupils to feel 'proud to belong'. This is evident in everything that happens here. Pupils feel happy, safe and valued in this friendly school. They are proud of the school's inclusive culture, where everyone is welcome.

Pupils access a broad and ambitious curriculum across a range of subjects. Pupils typically benefit from high-quality teaching that supports them to develop their knowledge over time. They enjoy opportunities to discuss what they are learning. Teachers encourage pupils to practise using the new vocabulary they have learnt. As a result, pupils develop their oracy skills effectively. In national examinations at the end of Year 11, pupils' achievements are typically in line with the national average. Students in the sixth form achieve well and move on confidently to further education, training or employment.

Leaders identify any barriers pupils may have to their learning. For example, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Tailored strategies ensure that they stay on track and are well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils understand why being in school every day matters. They are greeted warmly when they arrive to lessons. Pupils respond promptly to instructions and show positive attitudes towards their learning. They follow clear routines. Students in the sixth form are excellent role models to younger pupils. Bullying is rare. If it does occur, it is dealt with effectively by staff.

Throughout the school, pupils are inspired to try new things and support one another. They are actively encouraged to develop new skills and interests, such as outdoor adventures, performing arts and sports. Leaders make sure that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND actively participate.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment techniques effectively in order to identify and address gaps and misconceptions in pupils' knowledge, including any gaps that pupils have in their basic reading, spelling, punctuation and handwriting skills.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Cumbria Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Lorraine Hughes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by George Beveridge.

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 (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with the CEO, the local authority virtual headteacher and members of the board of trustees, including the chair. Inspectors also spoke with members of the governing body which is known as the local advisory board.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

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 school makes use of 2 registered alternative providers and 6 unregistered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.

The school includes a specially resourced provision funded by the local authority for pupils aged 11-19 with physical disabilities. The specially resourced provision can cater for up to four pupils. At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils on roll.

Lead inspector:

Kate Bowker, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Thomas Fay, Ofsted Inspector


Jacqueline Cahalin, Ofsted Inspector

Christopher Beard, Ofsted Inspector

Scott Maclean, 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 6 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

917

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: 1,067

School capacity

1,465

Above 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)

19.41%

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

3.82%

Close to 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

17.56%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

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).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

PD - Physical Disability

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (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)	49.7%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	45.0%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	55.4%	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)	48.8	46.1	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	49.1	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50.5	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)	0.08	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	0.33	-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)	36.7%	25.8%	Above
2023/24 (final)	15.4%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	41.2%	25.2%	Above

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)	36.2	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	34.5	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	45.0	35.0	Above

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)	-0.44	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.10	-0.57	Above

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)	36.7%	53.1%	-16.5 pp
2023/24 (final)	15.4%	53.1%	-37.7 pp
2022/23 (final)	41.2%	52.4%	-11.3 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)	36.2	50.4	-14.2

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	34.5	50.0	-15.6
2022/23 (final)	45.0	50.3	-5.3

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)	-0.44	0.16	-0.61
2022/23 (final)	-0.10	0.17	-0.27

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)	99%	92%	Above
2022 leavers (revised)	99%	93%	Above
2021 leavers (revised)	97%	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)	35.03	35.00	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	37.57	34.38	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	37.95	34.16	Above

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)	-0.3	0.0	Below
2023/24 (revised)	0.1	0.0	Close to average

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)	7.7%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	9.3%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	8.0%	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)	20.4%	23.4%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (3 term)	26.9%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	24.3%	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.

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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