

# **Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports**

**Hunter Hall School** 

February 2022

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# **School's Details**

School	Hunter Hall School
DfE number	909/6041
Registered charity number	1059098
Address	Hunter Hall School
	Frenchfield
	Penrith
	Cumbria
	CA11 8UA
Telephone number	01768 891291
Email address	office@hunterhall.cumbria.sch.uk
Headteacher	Mrs Donna Vinsome
Chair of governors	Mrs Natalie Harling
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils on roll	97
	EYFS 22 Juniors 75
Inspection dates	1 to 4 February 2022

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## 1. Background Information

#### **About the school**

1.1 Hunter Hall School is a co-educational day school. It is in a rural setting on the outskirts of Penrith, and was formerly a proprietorial school founded in 1985, to educate pupils from seven to eleven years of age. It moved to its present site in 1991 and in 1993 the age range was increased to accommodate pupils from the age of three, incorporating the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school then became a charitable company overseen by a governing body.

- 1.2 During the period March to June 2020, the whole school remained open only for children of key workers. During this period of closure the school provided remote learning materials for all pupils.
- 1.3 In the interests of infection control during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, inspection evidence was gathered partly remotely and partly on site to reduce contact within the school setting.
- 1.4 In line with the direction given by the Department for Education (DfE) at the time, no evaluation has been made of the nature or effectiveness of any provision made during the period March to August 2020, including its impact on pupils' learning, achievement or personal development. Any concerns relating to pupils' welfare during this period which directly relate to measures implemented by the school have been considered.
- 1.5 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, all pupils other than the children of key workers, vulnerable pupils or those in pre-school received remote learning provision at home.
- 1.6 In 2020 and 2021, public examinations were not held.
- 1.7 Since 2020, EYFS profiles have not been externally moderated.

#### What the school seeks to do

1.8 The school seeks to empower its pupils and promote their independence, through academic endeavour and supporting their pastoral well-being. It aims to develop well-rounded, confident and resilient young people, by creating a broad range of educational opportunities outside the classroom as well as within. It further seeks to provide an enriching co-curricular programme and to build positive partnerships in the local community through nurturing an awareness of social responsibility in its pupils.

### About the pupils

1.9 Pupils come from a range of family backgrounds, predominantly from rural locations throughout the Eden Valley. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average for those taking the test. The school has identified 13 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, 4 of whom receive additional specialist help. One pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for one pupil, who does not require additional specialist support. Data used by the school have identified 11 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them to support their needs.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

#### Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as <u>met</u> or as <u>not met</u>. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: <u>The Education (Independent School Standards)</u> Regulations 2014, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework.

COVID-19: Inspection judgements do not cover the period March to August 2020 inclusive.

## **Key findings**

2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

## PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 National Curriculum tests in the years 2017 to 2019 confirm that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a) and the school's own framework for assessment confirms that this progress has been maintained since then.
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.

#### PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.

#### PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.

### PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.

#### PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

#### PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.
- 2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

#### PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.
- 2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

#### PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.
- 2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

## 3. Educational Quality Inspection

#### Preface

The EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

School name	National Curriculum name
Pre-School	Nursery

## **Key findings**

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
  - Pupils' oral skills are outstanding; they are highly articulate and speak with confidence.
  - Pupils maintain excellent attitudes to their studies, showing a keen eagerness to take part in lessons.
  - Pupils achieve at significant levels beyond the classroom through extremely high levels of participation in events and activities.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
  - Pupils demonstrate an outstanding capacity to contribute to the benefit of others across the school.
  - Pupils demonstrate excellent behaviour for their age.
  - Pupils exhibit extremely high levels of social development for their age, enabling them to contribute successfully to collaborative endeavours.

#### Recommendations

- 3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider the following improvements:
  - Improve pupils' independent study skills by promoting wider access to a range of sources, including information and communication technology (ICT), to support their learning in school.
  - Enable pupils to benefit further from local community involvement by re-establishing links with other community groups and schools when it is judged safe to do so.

## The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 The pupils exhibit extremely strong skills and knowledge across a broad range of subject areas. Their progress is facilitated by the school's wide-ranging curriculum which, besides the traditional subjects,

offers a range of outdoor education opportunities and scheduled periods to promote well-being. For example, a Year 2 group was fully engaged in a yoga lesson allowing pupils to return to their classroom refreshed and refocused. The development of pupils' skills begins in Nursery where, for example, children showed well-developed dexterity and outstanding concentration for their age whilst working on a range of threading activities. By Year 6, pupils show excellent levels of confidence in a diverse range of subject areas including languages, drama and sport. Pupils of all ages develop additional skills in the range of available clubs and extra-curricular activities. Pupils attribute their development to the staff. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaires, an overwhelming majority of pupils said that teachers know how to help them to learn, and the vast majority of pupils felt that their teachers know their subject well. Inspection evidence supports these views. The further development of skills and knowledge for more able pupils is encouraged by the provision of a range of extension activities, including additional examination preparation classes, attendance at which enhances their confidence to face their forthcoming assessments. Such outcomes represent a fulfilment of the school's aim to create a broad range of educational opportunities outside the classroom as well as within.

- 3.6 In standardised tests and examinations, including National Curriculum Tests in 2018 and 2019 and the EYFS Profile, attainment is excellent. Rates of progress for all pupils, including those with SEND, are usually high for all pupils. In lessons, pupils of all abilities were seen to be achieving at a notable level for their relative ability. Pupils benefit from teachers' detailed support plans which identify weaknesses or strengths in individual pupils' performance and give specific actions for development. Most Year 6 pupils are successful in gaining places at the senior school of their choice, in many cases against strong competition and with a number succeeding in earning scholarships and awards.
- 3.7 The pupils' wider achievements are excellent. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents expressed that the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils clearly benefit from the opportunities provided within these. For example, in the last round of external music examinations over one-third of the school population were entered for an award with some older pupils achieving creditably high grades. In drama, where a large number of pupils earned distinctions in external examinations, there have been class winners in a local verse and prose speaking festival. In sport, the football and rugby teams compete successfully, often against larger schools and the cross-country teams have earned medals in a variety of competitions including at the recent Cumbria cross-country championships. Two pupils have played district or county level cricket. Recently the school team took first and second place in the Cumbria climbing championships and the school are district champions in chess.
- 3.8 The pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent and they are highly productive in a wide range of independent and group activities. For example, Year 3 pupils worked effectively together in small groups on a strategy to win a game in physical education (PE). Such attitudes are promoted by the security pupils feel in well-managed lessons. Pupils generally show notably high levels of enthusiasm in lessons and are very keen to take part. Year 1 pupils were asked to make the movement of an animal of their choice in a French lesson so that peers could name the animal in French. Pupils were exceedingly keen to be involved, were clearly enjoying their work and as a result consolidated their advanced vocabulary knowledge. The school thus meets its aim to empower its pupils and promote their independence, through academic endeavour and supporting their pastoral well-being.
- 3.9 Pupils are highly articulate. They speak with an assured confidence to both their peers and to adults. This begins in Nursery, where children expressed ideas coherently and with an excellent range of vocabulary for their age as they worked together to solve a problem. Groups of Year 4 pupils proved to be confident conversationalists at lunch. These skills are developed by regular drama lessons in which speaking skills are specifically developed. A considerable number of pupils benefit from further opportunities to enhance their skills through their preparation for speech and drama examinations and speaking competitions. Pupils develop sophisticated writing skills and use these across the curriculum, aided by the encouragement and aspiration provided by staff. For example, a young junior-age class demonstrated an excellent understanding of word classes, being able to explain the

function of a word in their sentence such as conjunction, preposition, determiner and pronoun. Data provided by the school, backed up by inspection observations, show that by Year 6 the pupils read at a sophisticated level and demonstrate well-developed comprehension skills. Pupils listen attentively to others, especially when working in groups and this was observed in an upper junior-age group presentation in drama.

- 3.10 Pupils demonstrate a good grasp of mathematical skills and show strong understanding of key concepts such as place value and basic arithmetic. Their skills are utilised effectively in other areas of the curriculum such as interpreting axes in science or calculating the team scores in a school cross-country event. The work of younger pupils showed that they are able to achieve correct answers and to readily explain the reasons for their answers. They benefit from a rigorous curriculum which emphasises basic skills and develops reasoning skills effectively. Mental arithmetic skills are strong across all ages. Some older pupils show mathematical knowledge well above that expected for their age, for example confidently manipulating recurring decimals. Others have achieved notable successes in the UK Primary Maths Challenge. Assessment data shows that many pupils with SEND grasp key concepts successfully and make good progress in line with their peers. However, data provided by the school shows that mathematics results are not yet quite consistent with the high levels achieved in other key areas such as reading. Pupils' work demonstrates that less able pupils do not always receive consistently structured help in feedback to help them to improve.
- 3.11 Pupils display good study skills for their age. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, an overwhelming majority of parents felt that the school helps their child to be confident and independent. Inspection evidence shows that pupils enjoy asking questions and being involved in lessons. They think for themselves and are keen to hypothesise. In a Nursery lesson, children worked together exceedingly well to solve the problem of getting their toys across the 'river' in the classroom. They shared ideas and through hypothesis and trial and error, agreed which solutions would work. Pupils analyse data effectively, as seen in a science investigation where Year 5 pupils collected data through a fair test to show how different temperatures impact on melting chocolate. Pupils plan their work effectively and read and listen critically. In response to a news programme about schools extending their school day, Year 3 pupils analysed the key points highly effectively and expressed well-constructed opinions and arguments about how they would like to spend any extra time in school. Pupils' competencies are developed due to skilful questioning and thoughtful lesson structuring by their teachers, though pupils rarely draw from a wider range of sources beyond their teacher or peers to support their learning in lessons.
- 3.12 Pupils develop a good level of competence in ICT. Pupils of all ages are exposed to technology and utilise it, as directed, in their work across the curriculum. For example, in the EYFS, children used a tablet to access a safe platform effectively to play counting games. Year 5 pupils wrote accurate letters to their pen pals in French, successfully utilising the translation features of a word processor and incorporating images. Year 1 gave instructions to a robot whilst developing a good knowledge of control technology and early programming. During inspection several absent pupils were seen to be accessing lessons remotely, demonstrating effective use of appropriate software.

## The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils' behaviour and their capacity to understand right and wrong is excellent. This begins in the EYFS where children respond well to teaching about appropriate behaviour and learn to respect their environment. Older pupils learned about the consequences of actions in a study of King John and the Magna Carta, debating successfully whether he was a good or bad man, and why. Strong pupil understanding is bolstered by topics on the law and democracy in the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. In questionnaire responses, an overwhelming majority of parents agreed that the school actively promotes good behaviour, and this view is supported by inspection evidence

- of a consistently high standard of behaviour around the school. In the very few cases where pupils make the wrong behaviour choice, staff report that they are genuinely remorseful and accept full responsibility for their actions. The pupils report that the clear and widely understood system of rewards and sanctions offers firm boundaries for their behaviour.
- 3.15 The pupils work highly effectively in collaborative enterprises from house events and charity fundraising to activities in outdoor education. Year 6 pupils exhibited mature collaboration whilst solving problems on the climbing wall, each providing guidance and advice to fellow team members on how to be more successful. It is common for pupils to initiate group activities themselves. For example, an assembly celebrated a group of pupils' achievement in producing an imaginative library display relating to a previous assembly theme to promote reading. Groups of pupils responded to a challenge to undertake a charity event which would increase the return on an investment of ten pounds, which resulted in collaboration, contribution to the community and economic awareness. In their questionnaire responses, the vast majority of pupils agreed that the school helps them understand how to make friends and develop positive relationships. This includes across year groups; for example, the senior pupils regularly interact with younger children in EYFS as helpers, mentors and as reading buddies.
- 3.16 The pupils' contribution to the school and the wider community is excellent and achieves the school aim of building positive partnerships in the local community through nurturing an awareness of social responsibility in its pupils. The development of social responsibility can be seen in the role of the Year 6 'Eco-troopers' who ensure that recyclable materials are appropriately handled in school. Taking part in community events such as the Woodland Trust initiative, collecting and planting acorns, and the Cumbrian litter pick, allow pupils to see wider issues in the outside world and the part they can play in solving them. Pupils readily appreciate the circumstances of those less fortunate and are active in supporting them. Pupils have raised significant sums for local and national charities and several fundraising initiatives have been pupil initiated, such as a recent cookie sale. In recent years, pupils have made a difference in the local community by visiting local residential care homes and supporting numerous local charities including a children's hospice with their sponsored 'reindeer run'. During a recent initiative entitled 'Summer of Kindness', younger pupils completed their own community acts of kindness such as making cards for elderly neighbours and collecting food for the foodbank. Pupils have developed strong teamwork skills through an initiative instigated by the school's leadership, to build sporting partnerships with other local schools. Recent opportunities to work in the community have been hampered by COVID-19 and opportunities for contacts outside school have been more limited. Within school there are numerous positions of responsibility for the senior pupils including heads of school and captains in different areas. The pupils view their roles with great seriousness and wear their badges of office with pride. They are expected to be leading role models for the younger pupils and have responsibilities around school which they fulfil with great diligence.
- 3.17 Pupils develop an excellent self-understanding. Older pupils can speak about their aspirations and know what skills they will need to achieve them. Pupils exhibit high degrees of self-discipline and self-regulation as they walk around the school, staying in orderly lines and being calm, even without close teacher supervision. Pupils exhibit an assured self-confidence and notable self-esteem which is developed through the highly effective use by staff of praise and encouragement. Pupils know they can freely approach members of staff for help and advice, confident that staff know them well. This sense of security breeds self-confidence as shown in a recent concert where a fifth of all pupils performed by reciting, playing or singing in public. Such performances also reveal high levels of self-discipline in committing to a practice and rehearsal regime. Project work independently undertaken by pupils demonstrated commitment to a high quality of work through good self-discipline. In their questionnaire responses, the overwhelming majority of pupils indicated that they value the constructive feedback and diagnostic comments given by teachers in marking which helps the pupils understand how to improve their work. Pupils' development of such qualities enables the school to meet its aspiration of developing well-rounded, confident and resilient young people.

- 3.18 Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Most relish the opportunities available in physical and outdoor education and their experiences in these areas enable pupils to develop the ability to assess personal risks. For example, Year 3 pupils showed a good understanding of the need to warm up before exercise in PE. Reception children receive a weekly reminder of safety rules before going into the forest for their outdoor lessons and respond positively. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of the need for healthy diet and the importance of sleep. Those interviewed know how to stay safe online and were quick to point out that they must not speak to strangers online or accept unknown individuals as friends. Pupils also demonstrated a mature willingness to speak to a known adult if they had any issues or worries in their private or academic life so that any pressures could be alleviated.
- 3.19 The pupils develop good decision-making skills. The youngest children in the EYFS practice making decisions by choosing who to play with, which activity to pursue and how to solve the challenges presented in their learning. Year 6 pupils respond well to the expectation to make the right decisions about how to achieve the goals in their responsibility roles. For example, they prepare materials for house assembly successfully and give appropriate guidance to younger members of the school who come to them seeking advice. Pupils respond well to opportunities to develop such skills presented in the curriculum, including outdoors. Whilst ghyll scrambling, older pupils made successful choices whether to take the safer route or the faster route back to base. In bouldering, pupils were rewarded for making the optimal decisions to complete the course.
- 3.20 Pupils value highly the non-material aspects of life. Many developed well their understanding of the values of giving their time and being kind during a recent charity initiative to help refugees. Pupils do not rush moments of calm reflection such as saying grace at lunchtime or a prayer in assembly. They show a well-developed aesthetic and cultural awareness as seen in Year 2 pupils' appreciation of the work of Jackson Pollock. Year 4 pupils demonstrated tangible enjoyment of their ukulele ensemble piece in a music lesson and Year 3 pupils exhibited excellent religious understanding in their recent study of Hanukkah.
- 3.21 Pupils have an active respect for diversity and a good cultural understanding. They are inclusive of those from different backgrounds, mixing readily with peers of other nationalities and beliefs. This view was reflected in the parents' questionnaire responses where the overwhelming majority agreed that the school actively promotes the values of democracy, respect and the tolerance of other people. Pupils enthusiastically celebrate local traditions such as performing a nativity in the local church at Christmas or respectfully observing Remembrance Day. Pupils with non-European heritage have helped classmates to broaden their cultural perspectives by speaking about their family's culture and faith. Older pupils showed great empathy and sensitivity as they contributed to a refugee project and discussed the impact of the recent change of government in Afghanistan and the implications this can have on children and their families. Reception children explored their senses as they enjoyed tasting a selection of Chinese food. They were voluble in their enthusiasm as they savoured the tastes and the textures of new foods demonstrating an excellent capacity for wider cultural development.

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## 4. Inspection Evidence

4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form times and assemblies. Inspectors visited the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mr Robert Lilley Reporting inspector

Mr Philip Bowd Compliance team inspector (Bursar, HMC school)

Mr John Bond Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)