

Thomas Walling Primary Academy

Lindfield Avenue, Blakelaw, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE5 3PL

Inspection dates

21–22 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The impact of teaching on pupils' learning since the previous inspection has not been consistently good enough. It does not ensure that pupils are making fast progress to catch up to where they should be for their age and/or starting points.
- Leadership in the early years is not yet strong enough. Inaccurate assessments are giving a more generous view of how much children have achieved in the provision.
- Some activities in the early years lack purpose and challenge. This means that some children are not developing their skills and knowledge quickly enough.
- Pupils have not been given enough opportunities to deepen and apply their learning in mathematics.
- The teaching of reading is not giving some pupils the skills to use their phonics knowledge or to develop their understanding of texts. Pupils are not reading as fluently as they should be.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not making the rapid progress that they need to in order to catch up with other pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- The most able pupils are not challenged enough in lessons to extend their learning. Activities are sometimes too easy for them; therefore they are not making good enough progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher and members of the restructured leadership team have made a significant difference in improving the quality of teaching and learning in a very short period of time.
- As a result of changes in leadership, staff morale is high and staff are dedicated to improving the effectiveness of the school.
- Strategies to improve pupils' writing have rapidly improved standards. Pupils are using their writing skills well in other subjects in the curriculum.
- Pupils are very well behaved and show mature attitudes when discussing current affairs. They are being prepared well to make a positive contribution to society.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure good and better teaching in all subjects to improve the rates of progress for all pupils by:
 - making sure that teachers consistently challenge the most able pupils
 - providing opportunities for pupils to read more often to practise using their phonological knowledge, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, younger pupils and those who failed to attain the required standards in the phonics check in key stage 1
 - ensuring that pupils are taught how to use the full range of skills when reading
 - giving pupils opportunities to apply their skills in mathematics to investigate, solve problems, reason and justify in order to deepen their learning.
- Improve the provision and outcomes in the early years for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able, by:
 - making sure that leaders have the knowledge and skills to identify what improvements can be made to increase the amount of progress children make
 - carrying out accurate assessments which clearly identify what children can do and what the next steps are in their learning
 - ensuring that activities are planned and provided with a clear learning focus and purpose
 - ensuring that adults do not miss opportunities to question and prompt children to develop their curiosity and understanding
 - providing focused activities, both indoors and outdoors, for children to fully develop their learning in reading, writing and mathematics.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium is recommended in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new headteacher, who started in January 2016, immediately halted the decline in standards since the previous inspection. She has worked tirelessly to ensure rapid improvement in the quality of teaching. This has resulted in a dramatic rise in standards, particularly in writing, and solid foundations have been laid for sharp improvements in other areas. Her drive, dedication and the impact she has had since taking up post are exceptional.
- The newly structured leadership team has embraced the substantial changes being made and fully supports the strategy for taking urgent action. The headteacher ensures that her vision is fully understood, and other leaders are now well skilled and able to support her in driving the shared vision for further improvement.
- A very precise, tailored and planned programme for professional development for all staff is being delivered with much success. Very astutely, the headteacher delivers all of the training herself, to help teachers and teaching assistants to improve their practice, both pedagogically and on subject matter. She ensures that all staff are getting one message, from her, about what her expectation is and how things should be done. This means that there are no mixed messages. This has resulted in greater consistency and improved practice throughout the school, and has ensured that individual support for teachers can be identified quickly.
- The appointment of a lead teaching practitioner to the leadership team has enabled staff to receive intensive support and coaching so that their teaching improves. The headteacher monitors this closely and regularly works with the lead practitioner to devise a personalised programme of support for staff, including modelling good techniques and assisting with planning, assessment and teaching. This has had a significant impact in ensuring that the quality of teaching improves.
- The school's curriculum has recently been overhauled, and is now keenly focused on key skills, pupil engagement and coverage of key competencies. It is enriched by adults with specialisms teaching some of the subjects. For example, in key stage 2 French is being taught by a fluent French speaker. Furthermore, every pupil plays a musical instrument and is being taught by a music specialist. This music project is allowing all pupils to experience the joy of making music, and pupils delight in their achievement of this.
- The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to boost their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully. Regular discussion and debate take place on current affairs through the use of 'information stations' in each class. Pupils talk about issues which affect them locally, nationally and internationally. This is handled with sensitivity, and allows pupils to listen to others' views and respond with respect. This is ensuring that pupils are being well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The primary school physical education and sport premium is being used to good effect to promote physical development and to encourage active and healthy lifestyles. Teachers are benefiting from regular professional development from specialist sports coaches, and pupils are enjoying active lunchtime activities and a range of after-school clubs which are in high demand. Participation rates and levels of interest have greatly increased since this provision was introduced.

- Over time, pupil premium funding has not been used effectively, because differences in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally have not diminished. This is because precise actions to improve those pupils' attainment and progress have not been put in place effectively. The new headteacher is focused on raising standards for all pupils; therefore, plans are now being developed specifically for disadvantaged pupils to make even more progress. Governors are monitoring these plans carefully.

Governance of the school

- The directors of the Laidlaw Schools Trust and the local governing body are working effectively with school leaders to ensure that vital improvements are being implemented swiftly.
- The trust and local governing body acted swiftly to tackle serious leadership concerns. This has resulted in the appointment of an exceptional leader who has transformed the school in a very short period of time.
- Both the trust and the governors have robust systems in place to challenge and check the effectiveness of leaders at all levels. They have high expectations and hold them to account well by focusing clearly on the impact of their actions. In addition, teachers now have very clear targets relating to their performance, which can be measured for success. These targets are directly linked to pay progression.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that rigorous systems and procedures are in place for the recruitment of all staff. Safer recruitment training has been undertaken so that leaders and governors have up-to-date information about how to recruit with regard for the safeguarding of pupils.
- Staff receive regular updates on safeguarding issues to ensure that they are aware of changes in processes, and that they are current in their thinking and decision-making when dealing with vulnerable pupils and families. Very recent training at the beginning of this term has resulted in staff having heightened awareness and improved strategies to deal with issues such as child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and radicalisation.
- The culture of keeping pupils safe from harm permeates all aspects of the school's work. The school's welfare manager works closely with families to ensure that appropriate support and help are accessed where required. For example, a school counsellor allows pupils access to play therapy to support them in difficult circumstances, and the learning mentor in the newly created nurture group is providing a calm yet stimulating learning environment for pupils who require a more bespoke approach to the curriculum.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement. Improvements have been made more recently. For example, the teaching of writing has significantly improved pupils' writing composition and expression. This has also resulted in improvements in grammar, spelling and punctuation, and is having a good impact on outcomes across other

subject areas. Improvements to the way in which reading is being taught are starting to take effect, and strategies to improve understanding in mathematics are at the initial stages of being implemented. These strategies in reading and mathematics are not yet embedded; therefore it is too early to measure their impact.

- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve. During lessons, pupils are not challenged to think deeply, and are often completing tasks and activities that they can already do. This is resulting in pupils not making rapid enough progress to catch up with their peers nationally.
- In mathematics, pupils are not being given enough chances to apply the skills and knowledge that they have acquired to new problems and concepts. A new system is being implemented to do this, but currently pupils do not always demonstrate the vocabulary to be able to apply their skills, because they are not being given opportunities to develop their reasoning and justification skills. Consequently, pupils are not yet mastering mathematics at the level required.
- The teaching of phonics is now systematic and pupils are being taught how to synthesise sounds with some success. However, when some pupils attempt to apply their phonological knowledge when reading books and texts, they are not always using the correct strategies to help them to read unfamiliar words. A number of disadvantaged pupils and younger pupils who did not attain the required standard in the phonics check are not consistently being given the correct support and help to develop their reading skills. Furthermore, the teaching of specific strategies to aid pupils to understand, deduce and infer from texts is not precise enough. As a result, pupils are not making enough progress in reading, and older pupils are not reading as fluently as they should be.
- Due to focused professional development from the leadership team, an increasing number of teachers are using what their pupils have learned in previous lessons to plan activities and tasks which will move their learning on effectively. They are using questioning techniques to ensure that pupils understand and to help move the learning forward. Where this occurs, learning is apparent and pupils are fully involved in the tasks. However, a few teachers are not doing this as well as others, and are planning tasks which do not reflect what the pupils have previously learned and already understand. As a result, learning in those lessons is reduced and pupils are not making the same amount of progress as pupils in other classes.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are having their needs met well when they are provided with precise interventions outside of the classroom which are designed to meet their educational needs. However, they are not always taught at the appropriate level within the classroom and this is hindering their progress.
- There have been recent, significant improvements in the teaching of writing, including grammar, spelling and punctuation. Leaders have devised a methodical approach to this and teachers have had comprehensive training to deliver it successfully. Leaders have closely monitored the impact of this, and significant progress has been made by most pupils in this aspect. Pupils' work in books demonstrates this rise in standards.
- The school's new policy for marking and feedback, which teachers are mainly applying consistently, is being used as an effective tool in securing pupils' learning and understanding. Leaders act swiftly in implementing tweaks in practice from staff to improve this further.

- Leaders have established rigorous assessment procedures throughout the school, to ensure that the progress of pupils is closely tracked and monitored. Consequently, pupils who need additional support are now being quickly identified.
- The lead teaching practitioner, along with other members of the leadership team, has worked with individual teachers to raise standards in a range of subjects. They have improved the way that identified teachers plan, assess, set learning objectives, use the teaching assistant effectively, deliver ability-appropriate work and measure how much progress pupils are making. This has been fundamental in improving the quality of teaching across the school, and lays a solid foundation for securing further improvement.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud to attend the school, and are keen to engage adults in discussion to show off their successes. Pupils delighted in explaining to inspectors their achievements at Thomas Walling, and are keen to exhibit their talents.
- Pupils feel safe and well looked after. The curriculum provides opportunities for them to learn how to keep themselves safe when using the internet, as well as about the precautions to take if they feel unsafe both in and out of school. In addition, pupils are given opportunities to find out about healthy eating and are encouraged to participate in activities which promote active lifestyles.
- Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities around the school. This includes being active members of the school council. This approach allows pupils to develop their understanding of democracy. As a result of listening to the pupils they represent, and presenting a case to leaders in school, school council members have been able to get the school lunches changed. Older pupils are trained to become friendship ambassadors, encouraging and supporting others on the playground, particularly if pupils appear to be on their own.
- Those pupils who are vulnerable, or need additional help and support to aid them either at home or in social and academic activities at school, are receiving very good-quality guidance from skilled adults employed in the school.
- Discussions with pupils demonstrate that they have mature attitudes and views about others with different beliefs, backgrounds and views. One child commented, 'it doesn't matter what skin colour you have, it matters what is inside'.
- The majority of parents are positive about the school, especially everyone's efforts to help pupils learn, ensuring the safety and well-being of their children and listening to their concerns. Parents appreciate the action taken to improve security around the school and look forward to receiving more reports about their child's attitudes and behaviour on a regular basis.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are very well mannered, courteous and friendly as they move around the school. The Year 6 pupils appreciate the responsibility of being good role models for other

pupils, and ensure that they do it smartly by wearing their Year 6 ties. Their attitudes demonstrate a good understanding about being responsible citizens.

- Staff have high expectations of behaviour, which results in pupils behaving well both in lessons and during other times of the day. The systems in place to deal with inappropriate behaviour are effective and adhered to consistently. Pupils also know that any misbehaviour is dealt with quickly by adults.
- During lessons, pupils show that they have good attitudes to their learning. They listen carefully to adults and respond in a positive manner. Pupils concentrate well on their learning and work well independently, in pairs and in larger groups.
- Through activities in the curriculum, assemblies and 'friendship fortnight', pupils are clear in their understanding about bullying in its various forms, for example cyber bullying and racism, and know what to do if they experience or witness this. They are also confident that all adults in school take such matters seriously and act with sensitivity and compassion. A few parents expressed concerns about some of these issues on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors found that leaders have good systems in place to address this and endeavour to eliminate any kind of prejudicial behaviour quickly.
- The attendance of a small number of pupils at the school is not good enough. Leaders take swift action to encourage and promote good attendance, and this has resulted in some pupils attending more regularly. An attendance officer is employed to deal with attendance issues and the welfare manager regularly liaises with families who find it difficult to get their children into school. Attendance has improved slightly in a few classes, but not in others. This term, nurture provision for vulnerable pupils has improved the attendance of pupils who have been persistently absent. It is too early to identify if this will have a longer-term impact.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because pupils are not consistently making good progress across many subject areas. Due to pupils not making rapid progress, attainment is not improving quickly enough. Too many pupils are leaving the school working below the level expected for their age. Therefore those pupils are not prepared sufficiently for their next stage of education. Recent improvements in the quality of teaching, implemented and monitored carefully by leaders, have started to reverse this trend.
- The school's use of funding for pupils who are disadvantaged has not been effective over time and as a result they are not making the rapid progress needed to catch up to other pupils nationally. The achievements of a large proportion of pupils across the school are below age-related expectations and the achievements of many disadvantaged pupils are even further behind those of other pupils in the school. Therefore, there is still a very large difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in the school and where they should be for their age. Pupils need to make rapid progress to do this, and currently progress for most is inconsistent and slower than required.
- In 2016, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 remained low, although there was some improvement on the previous year, particularly in attainment in writing and

grammar, spelling and punctuation. While the progress pupils made across key stage 2 still was not good enough, it was an improvement on the amount of progress that pupils have made historically. In January 2016, 7% of pupils were working at age-related expectations in writing. By the end of the summer, 75% of pupils achieved the expected standard. This was due to the rapid improvements in the teaching of writing.

- By the end of Year 2, standards in writing improved for most pupils. Not as much progress was made in reading, and standards in mathematics remain stubbornly low.
- Progress for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is inconsistent. They make better progress when they are accessing support which is directly focused on their needs. However, their progress is stalling when they are in the classroom as they do not receive the precise teaching that they need to move them on quickly from their starting points.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics is now broadly in line with the national average.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Provision in the early years requires improvement because there is an inconsistency in the quality of provision throughout the department. Provision is more effective in Little Owls and in the Nursery.
- Children enter the provision with skills which are usually below those typical for their age. The proportion of children attaining a good level of development remains below the national average but appears to be improving. However, inspectors found that teachers' assessments are inaccurate and overgenerous. Therefore fewer children would have attained this standard if assessments were accurate. This means that not enough children are ready for Year 1.
- Not enough pupils are making swift enough progress during their time in the early years. This includes disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils. This is because some of the activities lack a clear purpose or focus. Adults also miss opportunities to question and prompt the children during their activities and play to move their learning on and develop their curiosity. Therefore the quality of teaching requires improvement.
- Opportunities for children to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills are not abundant, either indoors or outdoors, even though these are skills that many children need additional help and support with. Where activities are provided, they do not always inspire or motivate children to want to participate and are often the activities where adults are not utilised or deployed to engage with the children.
- Children in Nursery are accessing exciting and stimulating areas for their communication and language development. Key workers are very keen to engage the children fully in these areas, which is resulting in children making good progress in this aspect of their development. The same opportunities are not readily available for children in Reception.
- Children attending Little Owls, which provides a learning environment for pupils aged two, are accessing a wide range of activities which are stimulating and appropriate. They are closely supervised and interaction from key workers is good.
- Children's behaviour throughout the provision is good. They listen well to adults and are encouraged to play with others cooperatively. Children demonstrate that they are

beginning to understand the impact of their actions on others.

- Safeguarding and child protection procedures are thorough and well understood by all staff. Furthermore, there are no breaches in welfare arrangements. All staff ensure that children's welfare needs are met, ensuring they are kept safe from harm.
- Staff have forged good relationships with parents, and engage regularly with them to share their successes or to discuss any concerns. Parents are welcomed warmly into the provision, and feel comfortable when attending. Home visits prior to children entering the provision ensure that staff gain a better understanding of each child's starting points. However, this information is not always capitalised on well once children arrive. This slows the pace of children's learning and development.

School details

Unique reference number	140788
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10019365

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	481
Appropriate authority	The Laidlaw School's Trust
Chair	Eileen Bolton
Headteacher	Liz Greensides
Telephone number	01912 860 333
Website	www.walling.newcastle.sch.uk/
Email address	admin@walling.newcastle.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the curriculum, pupil premium funding and governance.
- Thomas Walling Primary School became Thomas Walling Primary Academy when it joined the Laidlaw Schools Trust in April 2014.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed and there have been significant staffing changes and restructuring.
- The school currently meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides for two-year-olds who are eligible for additional funding in Little Owls.
- Additional hours for Nursery children are funded by the sponsor.
- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who leave and join the school throughout the year is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support from the pupil premium is higher than average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons and also made some short visits to classrooms. The headteacher observed lessons jointly with inspectors.
- Inspectors listened to a range of pupils read and reviewed the work in pupils' books.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and during break and lunchtime was observed.
- Inspectors talked informally to pupils in lessons and around the school and held formal meetings with pupils from across key stage 2. They also met with small groups of pupils who had identified special educational needs and/or disabilities, and some of the most able pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and class teachers. In addition to this, inspectors met with members of the local governing body and two directors from the Laidlaw Schools Trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including leaders' evaluation of the school's performance, school improvement planning, and documents monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning. They also looked at minutes of the local governing body meetings, the school's own policies and documentation relating to safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors took into account the views of parents during the inspection, as well as 34 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors took into account the views of the staff throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Suzanne Lithgow, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Cathy Lee	Ofsted Inspector
Zoe Westley	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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