

Walney School

Sandy Gap Lane, Walney, Barrow-in-Furness Cumbria LA14 3JT

Inspection dates

29–30 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The school has been too slow to improve the progress of its pupils. Outcomes were inadequate in 2015 and 2016. Current Year 11 pupils are expected to achieve better outcomes overall, but the improvement in their rates of progress is not enough to raise their achievement to acceptable levels.
- Leaders have not done enough to improve the achievement of key groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, the most able and boys.
- Some subject leaders do not take the lead in improving teaching in their areas.
- The quality of teaching is too variable and is not good enough overall to enable pupils to make the faster progress necessary to make up lost ground.
- Some teachers have low expectations of what pupils should achieve. The most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently in some subjects.
- Pupils' outcomes in science are low and show little sign of improvement.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is not consistently effective.
- A minority of pupils have poor attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is not well managed by some teachers.
- The special educational needs coordinator has not yet acquired the mandatory qualification. Staff who teach pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have had insufficient training.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher provides very strong leadership. He is determined to provide the best possible education for the pupils of Walney and is taking concerted and robust action to improve the school.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate.
- Subject leaders in mathematics and English are improving the quality of teaching in these subjects.
- The school has been successful in improving overall attendance, which is now close to national averages.
- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective.
- Governors provide strong support and challenge to leaders at all levels.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for pupils, by:
 - taking urgent action to remedy underachievement in key groups of pupils, especially the most able, disadvantaged pupils and boys
 - reducing the variation in the performance of different subjects
 - taking urgent action to address underachievement of pupils in the current Year 11
 - improving the accuracy and validity of assessment and the tracking of pupils' achievement
 - improving the quality of teaching in science
 - raising standards of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.
- Improve the quality of teaching, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve and of the quality of work pupils should produce
 - ensuring that all teachers plan and teach lessons which challenge pupils suitably at all levels
 - continuing to share good practice internally and with external partners in order to develop more good and outstanding teaching
 - providing training for all staff on how to improve the teaching and progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
 - raising the standards of pupils' behaviour in a minority of lessons so that they match the best elsewhere in the school.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
 - developing the ability of subject leaders to lead on improving the quality of teaching in their areas.
 - ensuring that the special educational needs coordinator acquires the mandatory qualification as soon as possible.
- An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school's outcomes have been too low for too long. Leaders have not been successful in improving pupils' progress and raising their achievement in GCSE examinations to acceptable levels.
- Improvements in the rates of progress of current pupils in key stage 4 are fragile. In Year 11, improvement is not sufficient to enable pupils to make the progress they should. Leaders have not done enough to raise achievement in science across the school.
- Leaders say that a key factor in the school's performance in 2015 and 2016 was the weakness in staffing. Many teachers and leaders have left the school in the last two years. Other factors produced serious staffing instability, for example in science, where the school needed to call on temporary teachers. Nonetheless, the fact remains that, by the end of the 2015/16 academic year, outcomes for pupils had been low for at least two years. Staffing this year is much more stable.
- Leaders accept that their current systems for tracking pupils' progress do not provide precise information by which to make accurate predictions of pupils' GCSE performance. Leaders are in the process of devising a more effective system with the help of Queen Katherine School, the lead school in the multi-academy trust.
- Leaders have identified the main barriers to learning preventing disadvantaged pupils from making faster progress. The school uses its pupil premium funding appropriately to address these difficulties. However, its impact on raising achievement for disadvantaged pupils is too variable. Year 7 catch-up funding has had some effect on improving pupils' literacy but the school has not done enough to develop pupils' numeracy skills.
- The headteacher took up his post in January 2014, just as the school converted to an academy under the sponsorship of the multi-academy trust. He inherited a legacy of poor practice across much of Walney School's work. Poor leadership, weak teaching and ineffective governance had a negative impact on pupils' achievement over some years, and led to a loss of confidence in the school in the local community. Leaders have still not fully eradicated the effects of previous poor provision. Pupils in the current Year 11, for instance, are still making up ground lost in previous years in several subjects.
- The headteacher has tackled the school's weaknesses tirelessly and rigorously. In particular, he has sought to challenge staff whose performance did not meet expected standards, including that of some senior and middle leaders who have since left the school. The school has renewed all of its senior leadership team over the past three years. The new team, strongly led by the headteacher, is driving the school's programme of improvement robustly and determinedly and is improving the school's culture of learning.
- The headteacher and governors seek to appoint talented colleagues and refuse to accept 'second best', despite the very real difficulty local schools have in recruiting staff.

- The headteacher and his team of senior leaders ensure that subject leaders are held robustly to account for the performance of their departments. In turn, the subject leaders themselves now play a full role in regular and intense monitoring of their subjects. The headteacher intends that all subject leaders should become the 'headteachers in their own departments' and expect subject leaders to have a good understanding of key strengths and weaknesses through their monitoring. Senior leaders have ensured that responsibility for improvement rightly rests with heads of department. However, several subject leaders are not yet leading the development and improvement of teaching in their areas. As a result, teaching in some subjects is not as strong as it needs to be and there is wide variation in the performance of different subjects.
- Subject leaders in mathematics and English are making a difference to teaching. In mathematics, for example, the newly appointed leader is setting high expectations and has demanded higher levels of challenge in lessons from her colleagues.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has not yet acquired the mandatory qualifications. Staff who teach pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have had insufficient training. The SENCo has not had the opportunity to visit lessons where pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are taught. Thus, she has an incomplete picture of the quality of provision.
- The school's performance management arrangements are rigorous. Leaders and governors ensure that teachers and leaders themselves are robustly held to account for their performance. Targets set for all teachers and leaders are demanding.
- The curriculum broadly meets the needs of the pupils. The school has rationalised the curriculum in recent years, so that more time is now devoted to English, mathematics and science. The percentage of pupils taking the academic routes expected in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is improving steadily. Leaders are in the process of refining the curriculum further so that it matches pupils' needs more precisely, for example by offering more vocational options to those who would benefit from this approach. There is a strong emphasis on British values and the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Nevertheless, monitoring of form time is not yet regular enough to ensure that this time is well used.
- The school offers its pupils a range of extra-curricular activities, including charity work, skiing, the radio group, archaeology and robotics clubs. Pupils welcome and enjoy these activities.
- Leaders report that the community has increasing confidence in the school. For this academic year, the school doubled the percentage of parents who picked Walney School as first choice for their children.
- Leaders and governors have the capacity to go on improving the school, as they have made improvements in teaching, leadership, attendance and behaviour. The achievement of pupils is steadily improving, albeit too slowly. There is no complacency among leaders and governors. All accept that the school's performance has not been good enough and must improve. They are determined that it will do so.
- The multi-academy trust has provided support for leaders and continues to do so. School leadership is not dependent on this external support. Governors have full confidence in the headteacher's leadership.

- It is recommended that the school should not appoint newly qualified teachers in science.

Governance of the school

- Governors have not yet secured good outcomes for pupils.
- The governing body was replaced by an interim executive board when the school converted to academy status. This was subsequently replaced by the permanent governing body. Several governors are appointed by the multi-academy trust and a number have extensive experience of senior leadership positions in secondary schools.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They know that the school needs to improve further and they are determined that it will do so. They hold leaders and managers firmly to account and ask challenging questions about pupils' progress. They ensure that performance management arrangements are rigorous.
- Governors have a good knowledge of the school's finances, check that additional funding such as the pupil premium is used appropriately and ensure that the school remains financially solvent. They have agreed to increase staffing in English and mathematics departments in order to allow smaller classes and stronger support for pupils in key stage 4.
- Governors support the school wherever they can. For example, an experienced former headteacher on the governing body provides regular training for the school's middle leaders. Through their work as 'link governors', they have developed an understanding of the needs of departments and of the progress that pupils are making across the curriculum.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet statutory requirements.
- The school's safeguarding policies and practices are strong. Walney School actively promotes a culture of vigilance where pupils' safety and welfare are paramount.
- The school has rigorous checking procedures in place for child protection. All staff have been trained in safeguarding and child protection and they know what to do if they feel that a child is at risk. Referrals to outside agencies meet requirements and are followed up meticulously by school staff. Staff have had training on the 'Prevent' duty.
- Pupils have been taught how to keep themselves safe regarding issues such as e-safety. The school has filters in place to prevent inappropriate internet usage.
- Governors are trained in safeguarding and in the safe recruitment of new staff.
- The school works effectively with parents and external agencies to safeguard pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time has not been strong enough to raise achievement to acceptable levels. Teaching is still too variable overall to bring pupils' achievement up to expected standards. There is teaching that leads to good or outstanding outcomes for pupils.

- There remain some legacies from previous times. Some teachers have low expectations of what pupils should achieve. Pupils, especially the most able, are not challenged sufficiently in several subjects, particularly at key stage 4, so do not make enough progress from their starting points. Teachers often miss opportunities to deepen pupils' thinking and understanding through extended questioning.
- Pupils' progress in science subjects is slow. Evidence of pupils' work in their books confirms that teaching over time in science has not secured good enough progress. The new leader of the science department understands that urgent improvement must take place. She and her teachers are currently supported by an external consultant, brokered by the multi-academy trust.
- Most teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. In the majority of lessons visited, pupils worked hard and showed positive attitudes to learning. In a few instances, however, where teaching failed to engage pupils' interest, their attention waned. Inspectors observed low-level disruption in a small minority of lessons, but pupils who met the inspection team said that this does occur in several of their lessons.
- The school has not done enough to boost pupils' numeracy skills. Leaders did not evidence any improvement in pupils' numeracy skills as a result of the Year 7 catch-up programmes. Overall achievement in mathematics was inadequate in 2015 and 2016. The new subject leader has begun to address this stalling in progress by introducing numeracy activities for pupils in all year groups.
- Staff are aware of the literacy difficulties many pupils have when they first arrive at Walney School and they have worked hard to overcome these. The English department runs a series of programmes designed to improve pupils' reading ability and general literacy. For example, staff have introduced weekly library lessons for younger pupils. Spelling, punctuation and grammar activities are included in most lessons. The improvement in literacy is less well developed in other subjects, however. Inspectors saw many examples where teachers had missed the opportunity to correct or improve pupils' literacy.
- Leaders have introduced 'learning journeys' into all subjects: these define levels of learning for pupils and have built in appropriate challenges. Pupils record their progress through programmes of learning, and this allows teachers to assess their achievement more accurately. These documents are used effectively in several subjects, but are not yet fully embedded across the school.
- Senior leaders have introduced a series of 'fundamental features' which all teaching should encompass. Some subjects, for example, English and mathematics, have embedded these features successfully, and this is improving the overall quality of teaching. However, in some subjects, such as in science, improvement is not rapid enough. Some subject leaders are not leading the improvement of teaching in their areas well.
- Leaders link the professional development of teachers to individual and departmental areas for improvement identified in monitoring, so that teachers are helped to improve according to need. Teachers told inspectors that they welcome the opportunities they have for development and that they accept the greater accountability this entails.
- There is evidence of improving teaching. In mathematics, the new leader has had an immediate impact. Year 11 lessons in mathematics are challenging and purposeful,

enabling pupils to make quicker progress. The mathematics department has developed a consistent approach to assessment, which is helping pupils to improve their work. There is effective practice in resistant materials, characterised by Year 8 pupils demonstrating independence as they improved their projects: filing, moulding and finishing mild steel. Insightful teaching ensured that the most able pupils were challenged to produce more refined pieces. In physical education, the very precise assessment of individuals' skills has a strong impact on pupils' progress. Year 8 pupils in English showed good understanding verbally and in writing of key themes in poetry ballads.

- A scrutiny of pupils' books in English Baccalaureate subjects in Years 8 and 9 showed pupils generally making stronger progress, confirming evidence of more effective teaching over time in key stage 3.
- Although there are still some inconsistencies, most teachers now follow the school's assessment policy; their precise feedback helps pupils to improve their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils wear their uniform smartly and are courteous and respectful. However, some pupils do not take enough pride in their work and teachers sometimes do not set high enough standards for the quality of work they expect from pupils.
- Pupils generally feel safe in school, and they know how to stay safe. They told inspectors that there is little bullying and that staff usually deal with it effectively when it arises. Pupils said that there is little racism or homophobic bullying.
- The school has significantly reduced the numbers of pupils attending alternative provision. Only a very small number of pupils now attend with a registered provider so that their specific needs can be better met. This is well monitored by school staff, including the attendance of the pupils, and the school receives regular progress reports. The pupils are said to be making good progress and school staff are seeking to ensure that places are reserved for them at the local further education college.
- The school is successfully promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspectors observed an interesting assembly about peer pressure, morals and doing the right thing. Pupils learn about British values. Lessons seen covered aspects such as environmental issues and beliefs, philosophy and ethics. Pupils have opportunities to take part in extra-curricular performing arts activities.
- Pupils in all year groups are provided with objective advice, information and guidance regarding their future careers. However, school leaders are not monitoring the quality of careers provision closely enough. Nonetheless, pupils are developing an understanding of the broad range of careers open to them. The school is seeking to raise the aspirations of its pupils, for example through visits by university staff. In 2016, more pupils went on to level 3 courses locally than ever before. This included a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils than previously, although figures remained significantly lower than the national figures. Very few leavers in 2016 are not in education, employment or training.

- Breakfast and after-school clubs for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well attended, support pupils' personal development and enable them to improve their progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The behaviour of pupils as they went around the school site, at break and lunchtimes and between lessons, was good during the inspection. The school was calm and teachers managed behaviour unobtrusively. However, a small number of pupils who spoke to inspectors said that behaviour is sometimes not good. A minority of the teachers who responded to the online staff questionnaire also had concerns about poor behaviour and felt that senior leaders do not do enough to rectify this.
- Pupils generally arrive at lessons willing and ready to learn. They behaved well in most lessons observed by inspectors but there were a few lessons where pupils' rather passive attitudes restricted their progress. In a small minority of cases inspectors noted low-level disruption. A few pupils who met inspectors said that behaviour in some lessons, especially where temporary teachers are used, can disturb their learning.
- The proportion of fixed-term exclusions in 2014/15 was significantly higher than the national average, especially for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders said this rise was because of the stricter approach they needed to take to establish good behaviour. Since then, the number of exclusions has reduced considerably, including for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and leaders do everything they can to keep pupils in school.
- The school has worked hard to improve attendance, which is now close to the national average for secondary schools overall. Effective systems are in place to improve attendance. Persistent absence is slightly higher than the 2015 national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is lower than the average for other pupils nationally.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Outcomes have remained stubbornly low for too long. Pupils leaving the school in 2015 and 2016 were not well prepared for the next stages of education, training or employment, because too few made the progress expected of them from their starting points in English and mathematics. Performance across a range of subjects was low. The school performed inadequately when compared to the national picture in terms of the proportions of pupils attaining the top grades at GCSE in many subjects.
- In 2016 the Progress 8 score (the new government measure by which secondary school performance is assessed) was well below the national average. The school's most able pupils achieved poorly overall, especially in mathematics and science.
- The impact of pupil premium funding on outcomes was variable in 2016. Disadvantaged pupils improved their Progress 8 score. The difference between their performance and that of non-disadvantaged pupils in the school diminished. However, there were still large differences between the achievement of the school's disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally. The most able disadvantaged pupils achieved on average more than one GCSE grade less than did their peers

nationally across eight subjects. In English, they achieved nearly a grade less on average, while in mathematics the most able disadvantaged pupils were one and a third grades behind other pupils nationally.

- Boys' achievement in 2016 was significantly less than that of girls. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also made very poor progress compared with other pupils.
- Attainment in several key subjects was too low in both 2015 and 2016. In both years, the attainment of the most able pupils at the highest levels of GCSE was low in English, mathematics and in almost all science subjects. Humanities and modern foreign languages, however, were among the best-performing subjects in 2016.
- Leaders are beginning to have a positive impact on improving outcomes, especially in key stage 3. Improvements at key stage 4 are fragile, however, which leaders and governors acknowledge.
- The school predicts that its current Year 11 cohort will achieve a little better than the 2016 year group. Nonetheless, the improvement projected will still leave Year 11 pupils with achievement that is well below national figures. There is too much ground to make up. Disadvantaged pupils continue to perform less well than their non-disadvantaged peers. The difference has widened further in mathematics. A number of subjects continue to underperform, including science, which is projecting very low achievement figures currently.
- In Year 10, the picture is a little more encouraging. In most subjects, pupils are making better progress although many pupils remain below their expected target, particularly in biology. Leaders say that the diverse strategies put in place to raise boys' achievement are starting to show impact in Year 10. School data shows that the difference between the performance of boys and that of girls is diminishing significantly. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are performing in line with, and sometimes better than, their peers in school. Most-able pupils are making better progress than previously in English and mathematics. However, the school's tentative prediction for 2018 is that this group of pupils will perform below national averages across eight subjects if their current progress is maintained.
- It is in key stage 3 where the school can point to most progress. In Years 8 and 9, many more pupils are on track to reach or exceed their targets. In general, in both year groups, the differences between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils in school, and between boys' and girls' performance, are diminishing significantly. There remain large differences within individual subjects, for example for disadvantaged pupils in science in Year 8 and technology in Year 9, and in other subjects between boys' and girls' performance, which indicate there is still too much inconsistency. However, the general picture shows significant improvement in these two year groups. Inspectors' evidence from lessons visited and from a scrutiny of key stage 3 work confirms that pupils in the lower school are making faster progress.
- The most able pupils, including the disadvantaged most able, are making stronger progress across key stage 3.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are generally making better progress in key stage 3. There is evidence that the school's use of its Year 7

catch-up funding is improving pupils' reading skills, but more needs to be done to improve numeracy.

School details

Unique reference number	141041
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10022816

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	644
Appropriate authority	The Queen Katherine School multi-academy trust
Chair	Anthony Sinton
Headteacher	John Richardson
Telephone number	01229 471528
Website	www.walneyschool.co.uk
Email address	office@walney.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the impact of Year 7 catch-up funding on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the impact of Year 7 catch-up funding in the previous academic year.
- The school is much smaller than average size. There are more boys than girls in most year groups.
- The large majority of the school's pupils are of White British origin. The proportion of students with English as an additional language is low compared to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much lower than the national average.

- The proportion of pupils known to be disadvantaged is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.
- The school did not meet the government's floor standard in 2015. The floor standard is the minimum expectation for pupils' progress across a number of subjects including English and mathematics.
- The school uses the Real Volunteer Project to offer a small number of pupils alternative education provision.
- The school converted to become an academy in September 2014 and is a member of the Queen Katherine School multi-academy trust. The sponsor has given significant support to school leaders this year and last, including support for financial management and human resources issues, and training for senior and middle leaders. It continues to broker additional support for Walney School, for example in employing consultants to support and develop teaching.
- The school retains its own governing body. Many of the governors are appointed by the sponsor and are also members of the multi-academy trust's governing board.
- Many staff have left the school over the last two years.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons. They visited form time and an assembly and observed pupils' conduct at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons and scrutinised a sample of work provided by senior leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, subject leaders, class teachers and with governors. They met representatives of the sponsor, the Queen Katherine School multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils formally and spoke with many more pupils informally. They took account of the five responses to the online pupil survey.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of documents. These included: the school's internal data which tracks pupils' achievement; development plans and evaluations of the school's progress; minutes of governing body meetings; school policies; safeguarding procedures and records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils. Inspectors also scrutinised the school's website.
- The team took account of the 33 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and of the 29 free-text responses received from parents. They also considered the 20 responses to the staff online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Clive Hurren, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Ruddy	Ofsted Inspector
Annette Patterson	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Robinson	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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