

Dr Walker's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Fyfield

Walker Avenue, Fyfield, Ongar, Essex CM5 0RG

Inspection dates

23–24 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
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	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- School leaders have not been able to secure enough good teaching at the school since the previous inspection. As a result, standards at the end of Year 6 are not as high as they should be.
- The most able pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Teachers' expectations of what these pupils can achieve are often too low and the work which they set fails to provide enough challenge.
- Pupils do not achieve well enough in mathematics. In too many classes, pupils' progress is limited because teachers do not set enough work for pupils which challenges them to think hard and apply what they know about mathematics to solve problems.
- Pupils do not take enough pride in the presentation of their work.
- Pupils do not make enough progress in writing. They are not provided with enough opportunities to write at length in English or in other subjects across the curriculum.
- The early years requires improvement. Children do not have enough opportunities to develop their independence. There are also limited opportunities for them to develop across all areas of learning in the outdoor space.
- Older pupils do not always work as hard as they should. Too often, low-level disruption in lessons interrupts learning and prevents pupils from making good progress.
- Attendance is too low, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Pupil premium funding has not been used effectively to ensure that these pupils attend regularly, and many have fallen behind in their learning as a result.

The school has the following strengths

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Governors have supported the school well during a period of significant challenge and change at the school.
- Phonics is taught well and current pupils are making good progress in reading across both key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- The interim arrangements for supporting leadership during the headteacher's absence have been highly effective.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in mathematics and writing, by:
 - ensuring that teachers in all key stages pay sufficient regard to pupils' existing knowledge, skills and understanding when planning work
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length in English and other subject areas.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by ensuring that:
 - all teachers use the school's agreed policy to promote good conduct and positive attitudes to learning
 - pupils take pride in the presentation of their work.
- Improve the early years by:
 - ensuring that children have access to a stimulating outdoor area that enables them to develop in all areas of learning
 - encouraging and developing children's independence.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding 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

- During a period in which there have been significant changes to the teaching staff and the leadership team at the school, the quality of teaching has not been good enough to secure good standards in reading, writing or mathematics. Recent improvements have been made but these are not yet reflected in high enough standards across the school.
- School leaders, including governors, recognise how weaknesses in provision have led to the decline in achievement. They have put good plans in place to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and their actions are beginning to have a positive impact. Weak teaching is being challenged and, where necessary, support is being provided. There is evidence that standards are improving as a result.
- The interim headteachers have made a significant contribution to the school's recent improvement. Several parents commented on Parent View about the positive impact that their work has had on school life during a difficult and challenging period.
- Some of the additional funding that the school receives to support disadvantaged pupils has been used well to provide good support for these pupils. However, too many of these pupils continue to be persistently absent from school, which severely limits the progress they are making.
- There is a well-planned curriculum in place and pupils have regular opportunities to study subjects such as computing, art and French. Pupils' singing is excellent and during this inspection they were heard singing in Swahili in preparation for an upcoming performance. However, when studying science, geography and history, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills. This limits the progress that pupils make in these subjects.
- The additional funding that the school receives to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively. The special educational needs coordinator tracks the progress of these pupils carefully and ensures that appropriate support is provided. She monitors the impact of this support carefully. As a result, these pupils generally make good progress in their learning from their various starting points.
- Leaders ensure that British values are promoted well. Pupils are taught to respect other people's views and to value differences. They develop an understanding about how democracy works and they learn about major world religions.
- Leaders provide for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education well. Around the school, there is a wealth of evidence to show what pupils are learning and experiencing.
- Parents spoken to during this inspection were overwhelmingly positive about the school and the impact that it has on their children's lives. However, some of the responses recorded on Parent View were less positive, reflecting some parents' concerns about staffing changes and the behaviour in upper key stage 2.
- The local authority has provided regular support and challenge to school leaders and played a key role in establishing the current interim headship arrangements. However,

the judgements it has made about the school's effectiveness over recent times have been too positive and have failed to take account of the standards being achieved across the school.

Governance of the school

- Governors have provided good support and challenge to the school during a period of significant changes in both the leadership team and the teaching staff. They have helped to ensure that appropriate leadership arrangements have been put in place during the headteacher's absence and have helped leaders to manage the challenge of covering multiple changes to the staff team. Governors recognise the impact that recruitment difficulties have had on the school's effectiveness but have not used this as an excuse to accept low standards.
- Governors have a good understanding of the link between pay and performance and are fully aware of the school's strengths and the areas that require further improvement.
- Governors ensure that they keep up to date with their responsibilities by attending relevant training and, where possible, visiting the school to see for themselves how the school operates. They help to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fully compliant with the latest requirements and that child protection policies are adhered to.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding policies and procedures meet requirements, and that records are detailed and accurate. All members of staff have undertaken the statutory training for keeping children safe in schools and they are clear about their duties regarding safeguarding. Appropriate checks are made on all adults who work in the school and the school's policies are reviewed regularly.
- Pupils are taught how to keep safe in a range of situations, including when they use social media or the internet.
- The school works closely with parents and external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils are well supported.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies too much across the school. Too often, when planning lessons, teachers fail to consider what pupils can already do. The work seen in pupils' books demonstrates that not enough teaching is well matched to pupils' skills and abilities, particularly in key stage 1.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics is inconsistent across year groups. Some examples of good teaching were seen in pupils' books in key stage 2, where pupils were challenged to think hard and use their mathematical knowledge and skills to

investigate and solve problems. However, too often, teaching fails to challenge pupils, particularly those of higher ability. There is not enough evidence to show that pupils are making good progress in their learning in this key area across the school.

- Pupils do not write frequently enough, either in English lessons or in other subjects. They have too few opportunities to write at length or for different purposes. As a result, pupils do not build their stamina and resilience in writing and the quality of their writing often fails to match their abilities.
- The quality of teaching in subjects such as science, geography and history varies across the school. The most able and lower-attaining pupils are often provided with work at the same level, and they are rarely expected to write at length to explain or record their learning.
- Pupils do not pay enough attention to the presentation of their work. Untidy work is not challenged and pupils' handwriting skills are generally poorer than they should be for their age and ability.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Phonics is taught effectively. During this inspection, young children in the Nursery were able read words independently while playing a phonics game with each other. Children quickly learn the basics of reading and most become competent readers by the end of key stage 1. Many older pupils develop a love of reading and read widely and often.
- Support staff make a positive contribution to the progress that pupils make. They are well trained and provide good support when working alongside teachers in lessons and when supporting small groups.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils said that they feel safe in school and trust that adults will help them if required. They told the inspector that a small number of older pupils do occasionally misbehave but that bullying was not a problem at the school, as staff quickly sort out any problems.
- Pupils are regularly taught how to stay safe, for example through the cycling proficiency courses and when using computer technology. Older pupils spoke confidently about e-safety and described how the school regularly reminds them how to stay safe when using the internet.
- Vulnerable pupils are well known to staff, and appropriate structures are in place to support their welfare. Leaders also ensure that detailed plans are in place for these pupils and that these plans are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are having the intended impact. Leaders engage effectively with external agencies where necessary in order to provide support for the most vulnerable pupils.
- The vast majority of parents are confident that leaders have strategies in place to keep their children safe and to promote their well-being.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Some pupils in key stage 2 display poor attitudes to learning. Too often, they have to be reminded to concentrate and focus on their work during lessons. This problem is often compounded by teachers failing to use the school's behaviour policy to deal with such incidents.
- Overall attendance for all groups of pupils is below the national average. Too many disadvantaged pupils are persistently absent, and this has an adverse effect on their progress and attainment.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well and are respectful towards each other and the adults who teach them. Their conduct at breaks and lunchtimes is good. Pupils eat their lunch sensibly in the dining room and socialise positively.
- Pupils are proud of their school, but do not routinely take pride in the presentation of their work. Handwriting and presentation are not as good as they should be.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Standards at the end of Year 6 are not as high as they should be. Published results from 2016 show that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics combined was lower than the national average. This is because not enough pupils are making good or better progress from their different starting points.
- Pupils do not achieve well enough in mathematics. Although pupils make good progress in some year groups, too often teaching is not good enough to help pupils to make rapid progress in their learning. Only 50% of Year 6 pupils reached the expected standard in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2016.
- Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in writing. Although the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level at the end of Year 6 in 2016 was around the national average, for too many pupils this represented poor progress from their starting points. The work seen in books during this inspection did not show enough progress. Too few opportunities are provided for pupils to write at length, in English and other subjects.
- Recent improvements have been made to the teaching of phonics. As a result, younger pupils are now rapidly learning the skills required to develop into successful readers. The proportion of pupils passing the phonics check at the end of Year 1 in 2016 was above the national average.
- As they move through the school, pupils develop into confident readers. Younger pupils who were heard reading during this inspection receive good support and make good progress. Older pupils also demonstrated good reading skills, and the school's records indicate that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard at the end of key stage 2 will be above the national average in 2017, having dipped below in 2016.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress from their various starting points. School leaders review their

progress regularly to ensure that the additional funding is having the intended impact.

- The most able pupils do not achieve as well as they should. In too many lessons, there is a lack of challenge to push these pupils to improve. As a result, too few of these pupils achieve well at the end of key stage 2 in English, mathematics or other subject areas.
- Pupils who join the school at times other than the usual transition points often demonstrate lower attainment than would be expected for their age. Good pastoral arrangements are in place for these pupils, some of whom also require support in managing their behaviour. Generally, their progress is at least similar to others in the school and some make more rapid progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Too many of these pupils are persistently absent from school and this prevents them from making good progress. As a result, the gap in attainment between these pupils and other pupils nationally is not diminishing.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children start at the school with skills and abilities which are generally at or above those which are typical. Most children make good progress in developing early reading, writing and mathematics skills and the percentage reaching a good level of development in 2016 was above the national average. This represented good progress for some, but not all, children.
- The teaching of early reading and writing is highly effective. Children also make good progress in learning about number. However, their development in other areas of learning is not as effective. For example, not enough is done to develop children's knowledge, skills and understanding of technology. Children do not have regular opportunities to develop an understanding of how technology works. A lower proportion of children reached age-related expectations in this area of the curriculum than children nationally in 2016.
- Parents are positive about their children's experiences and their early learning. They contribute to the initial assessments that are made of their children and are regularly welcomed into school to observe and support their children's learning. During this inspection, many parents spent time at the beginning of the day reading with their children and talking about their children's learning with staff.
- During their time in the early years, children develop good attitudes to learning. They learn to persevere when working together and develop resilience and good levels of concentration. They are well looked after and feel safe and happy as a result.
- The outdoor area is safe and secure. However, staff do not make enough of this resource to develop children's interests across all areas of learning. Children are often over-reliant on adult supervision and not enough is done to develop their independence.
- Staff in the early years ensure that children are well cared for and safe at all times. Their vigilance is a real strength of the school. The excellent care, guidance and support provided help children to develop confidence and a love of learning.

School details

Unique reference number	115125
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10002704

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Josanne Balcombe
Headteacher	Wendy Myers
Telephone number	01277 899 298
Website	www.drwalkersfyfield.ik.org
Email address	admin@fyfielddrwalkers.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 July 2012

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average primary school.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- At the time of this inspection, the headteacher was on long-term sick leave. Her role was being filled by two interim headteachers.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is much lower than the national average.
- The percentage of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils joining the school at other than normal times is high.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all classes. Observations were carried out jointly with one of the interim headteachers.
- The inspector listened to pupils reading and scrutinised the work that they had completed in their books.
- The inspector talked to pupils about their learning, and behaviour and safety.
- The inspector met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspector looked at the school's evaluation of its own performance, its development plan and a range of other school policies. He also considered documentation relating to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector considered the seven responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector met with parents at the beginning and end of the school day. He also analysed the 21 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Paul Tomkow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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