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5 February 2018

Mr Peter Wallbanks
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Wallbanks

Short inspection of Walworth School

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 2018 with Chris Campbell, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in July 2013.

The school continues to be good.

Leaders have created a calm, warm and welcoming school in which pupils' individual differences are recognised and celebrated. You ensure that all teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) have the necessary skills to support pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs well. Pupils appreciate the support they receive. They acknowledge the pivotal role staff play in their improved behaviours. You, and your staff team, empower your pupils, rebuild their confidence and reintroduce them to learning. As a result, your pupils feel valued and worthwhile.

You have taken appropriate and timely action to remodel and expand the senior leadership team. The two new assistant headteachers, who are also the school's coordinators for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, have made a promising start to their leadership roles.

Your evaluation of the school's overall effectiveness is accurate. Leaders have identified the correct priorities for development in the school's improvement plans. However, the plans do not contain sufficient numerical targets by which governors can evaluate the impact of actions undertaken robustly.

The development of middle leaders, the school's subject leaders, was an area for improvement at the time of the last inspection. Subject leaders, including the leaders for English and mathematics, find it difficult to lead and manage their subjects effectively. They have not been given time to check on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in classrooms. Middle leadership continues to be an area for development.

Teachers ensure that the LSAs are deployed effectively. LSAs are highly skilled in behaviour management. They take a central role in supporting individual pupils with behavioural issues while the class teachers lead pupils' learning in each class. This was also an area for development at the time of the last inspection.

Pupils make rapid progress in moderating and improving their behaviours for learning. Most make good progress from their individual starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Not enough make sufficient progress in your very special provision to make up for learning time that was lost at their previous schools. Some do not attend often enough. As a result, pupils do not catch up with their peers nationally. Sometimes, teachers and LSAs do not have the very highest expectations of your pupils' academic abilities.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your school's systems and procedures to ensure that pupils arrive and depart safely every day are robust. All pupils are chaperoned while travelling to and from school in taxis. Their chaperones make sure that pupils alight from taxis straight onto the pavement. Staff are waiting to meet and greet pupils on arrival. This ensures a calm and safe start to every school day.

Staff are trained in child protection and safeguarding annually and periodically throughout the academic year. All are fully aware of when and how to make referrals following disclosures by pupils. The designated safeguarding lead makes timely referrals to the local authority's designated officer as and when the need arises. Staff work with a wide range of external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families access the support to which they are entitled.

All staff are fully trained in safe restraint techniques. All restraints are recorded in the school's 'bound book' appropriately. Senior leaders analyse the regularity of restraints and report their findings to the school's governing body. The number of restraints since the beginning of the current academic year has reduced markedly in comparison to the number over the same period last year.

There were a number of administrative errors in the school's record of staff recruitment checks at the beginning of the inspection. These were corrected by the time the inspectors left the school. Evidence from a sample of the school's recruitment files shows that staff are recruited safely.

Pupils feel safe in school. They understand the dangers of digital technologies and know not to give out any personal information. Pupils, parents and staff know that pupils do not attend school often enough. This is one of the school's key priorities for improvement.

Inspection findings

- 'I used to kick off every single day at my old school and I don't any more,' is a comment made by one pupil but echoed by many throughout the school during the

inspection. Pupils and their parents appreciate the sterling efforts made by school staff that result in improved behaviours at both school and home. Staff model proper behaviours at all times. They show pupils that they are valued in a host of small ways, for example by recognising hard work and rapid progress through displaying high-quality work on the walls around the school. Pupils are delighted when their work is chosen to be exhibited.

- The school's data on the number of restraints shows a reduction from 3.07 per day in the autumn term 2016 to 2.68 per day in the autumn term 2017. Similarly, there has been a sizeable reduction in the number of pupils who have been excluded from the school for a fixed term since September 2017.
- Pupils do not attend school often enough. For example, the proportion of key stage 2 pupils who attended school every day in the 2015/16 academic year was 94.1%. This dropped to 91.3% in 2016/17. Currently, the proportion is 93.7%. Although more pupils are attending key stage 2 now, they are not attending regularly enough to make up for lost learning time in their previous schools. The vast majority of pupils travel to and from school by taxi every day. There is no excuse for poor attendance at this very special provision.
- Classrooms are very warm and welcoming. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. The high ratio of staff to pupils ensures that pupils follow highly individualised learning programmes. Sometimes, adults do not have high enough expectations of their pupils. On these occasions, pupils do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable. As you correctly pointed out, there is too much variation in the progress made by pupils at Walworth. For example, not enough of the school's Year 1 pupils achieved the national standard in the check on phonics in 2017. They were not prepared well for reading Year 2 texts. Again, you quite correctly identified that 'reading unlocks the world' for pupils educationally.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's overall effectiveness is correct. Their plans outline appropriate priorities for improvement. For example, leaders have recently established a multi-disciplinary team in school. This team includes an occupational therapist, a child and adolescent mental health worker, and a speech and language therapist. Leaders' plans do not contain sufficient numerical targets by which governors can challenge or congratulate progress. Measuring the impact of school improvement actions precisely is an area for further development.
- The subject leaders for English and mathematics understand some of the strengths and areas for development in their subjects through checks they have made on pupils' workbooks. For example, the leader for English knows that pupils do not develop a neat and joined-up handwriting script by the end of key stage 2. Similarly, the leader for mathematics knows that more pupils are undertaking problem-solving activities following staff training that she delivered. However, subject leaders have not had the opportunity to observe teaching, learning and assessment first hand. This was an area for development at the time of the last inspection.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils attend school more often
- teachers and LSAs have consistently high expectations of their pupils' academic potential
- middle leaders are given the time necessary to check on teaching, learning and assessment effectively in the subjects they lead
- governors measure the impact of the actions undertaken by leaders to improve pupils' progress incisively, against numerical targets in the school's improvement planning.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Durham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Belita Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Members of the inspection team discussed the work of the school with you, the deputy headteacher, subject leaders, LSAs and six governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I checked a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, your improvement plans and records of restraints. Inspectors examined information about pupils' attendance, behaviour and achievement, both academically and behaviourally. I considered your analysis of the school's most recent surveys of parents' and pupils' views. Alongside you and your deputy headteacher, inspectors visited classes to observe teaching, learning and assessment. Team members checked the progress made by pupils in their workbooks, talked formally to a group of pupils from Years 3, 4, 5 and 6, and talked more informally to pupils in lessons about their learning. An inspector also read with pupils from Year 2.