

North Walsall Primary Academy

Derby Street, Walsall, West Midlands WS2 7BH

Inspection dates

9–10 October 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- North Walsall Primary Academy has a strong leadership team that has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders are determined to build on recent improvements in pupils' progress to ensure that standards continue to improve at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- Governors understand their roles and responsibilities. They have high expectations of school leaders and provide challenge and support. Governors took swift action to strengthen leadership by appointing an executive headteacher who has brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to the senior team.
- Leaders ensure that pupil premium funding is spent effectively. As a result, disadvantaged pupils made better progress last year than previously. However, in some year groups the proportion of disadvantaged pupils working at the standard typical for their age is low, particularly in reading and writing.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and they now use this to plan lessons that meet most pupils' needs. However, in several subjects across the curriculum the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. As a result, this group of pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- The teaching of phonics is secure. Pupils use their knowledge to read unfamiliar words successfully.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress in subjects across the curriculum.
- While improving, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 has been below national averages for the last two years.
- In most year groups, pupils make less progress in writing than other subjects because teachers do not address basic mistakes in grammar, punctuation and spelling well enough.
- Children settle well in the early years. They learn and behave well because adults plan learning that is well matched to children's needs. The quality of teaching is consistently good.
- Pupils behave well. They demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They are polite, well mannered and make visitors welcome.
- A new curriculum has recently been introduced. Leaders have ensured that it is broad and balanced. However, in some topics, pupils do not have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of what they are learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils who are working at the standard expected for their age in reading and writing at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2, particularly disadvantaged pupils.
- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers:
 - provide a sufficient level of challenge for the most able pupils in subjects across the curriculum
 - address misconceptions in grammar, punctuation and spelling so that pupils do not repeat mistakes.
- Further improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the curriculum is planned so that pupils will deepen their knowledge and understanding of what they are learning in a wide range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- An executive principal was appointed to lead the school in September 2018. The former assistant principal is now the head of academy. An assistant principal took up her post at the start of this term. This new team, whose members complement each other very well, has wasted no time in identifying key strengths and weakness within the academy. The improvement plan has a tight focus on improving outcomes for pupils and further developing the quality of teaching and learning. It sets out clear milestones which are understood by all staff and allow governors to measure the impact of any action leaders take.
- Leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching. They visit lessons, look at the quality of work in pupils' books and track the progress that individual pupils make in a range of subjects across the curriculum. Leaders use this information to ensure that training for staff is specifically targeted on improving outcomes for pupils. For example, because of training for teachers about what should be taught in each year group, work in pupils' books shows that they are making good progress in mathematics in all year groups. The academy's assessment information shows that there is still more to do to ensure that pupils make consistently strong progress in reading and writing in most year groups.
- Leaders have accurately identified the barriers faced by many disadvantaged pupils in the academy. As a result, they target additional funding appropriately. Disadvantaged pupils benefit from additional teaching staff, more resources to support learning at home and support for well-being and welfare. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils made better progress in 2017–2018 than in the previous year. In addition, rates of attendance for this group have improved.
- Physical education (PE) and sports premium funding is used effectively. Pupils enjoy a wide range of sports activities in PE lessons, at lunchtime and in after-school clubs where they use high-quality equipment. Leaders ensure that staff develop their skills through training from specialist sports coaches.
- The leadership of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is a strength of the academy. Pupils' additional academic, social and emotional needs are identified early, and interventions are implemented quickly. The academy seeks professional support for pupils where this is needed and works very closely with other agencies, including speech and language therapists and educational psychologists.
- The curriculum has been revised for this academic year to ensure that pupils develop skills and knowledge across all subjects in the national curriculum. Leaders also ensure that there are planned opportunities for pupils to practise and refine their reading, writing and mathematics skills. Pupils benefit from a wide range of visits and experiences that enhance their understanding of the topics they study. However, pupils' books show that pupils, particularly the most able, are not provided with opportunities that allow them to deepen their knowledge across a wide variety of subjects.
- Leaders are passionate about the need to ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is well developed. Opportunities, including theatre visits,

involvement in debates about topical issues, learning about major world religions and raising money for local charities are woven into the curriculum. Pupils develop a secure understanding of British values and are becoming well prepared for a life in modern Britain.

- The vast majority of parents who spoke to inspectors, or who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, are positive about the work of the school. They reported that their children are happy, and that academy staff are friendly and approachable.

Governance of the school

- Governors provide effective support and challenge for senior leaders. They hold all leaders to account and have high expectations of the impact that individual leaders will have. Governors responded quickly to appoint an executive principal when the former head teacher resigned in the summer term. The recent appointment of a new, experienced chair of governors has further strengthened the local academy committee.
- Governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. They are ambitious for the success of the school and to improve outcomes for all pupils. Governors receive information each term about pupils' progress. They use this to ask questions and to find out what leaders are doing to support any pupils who are at risk of falling behind.
- Governors check carefully on the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. They are aware of the improvements in disadvantaged pupils' progress last year. They ensure that action plans reflect the need to raise attainment for this group of pupils in reading and writing at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- Governors make regular visits to school in their role as a link governor. This allows them to make checks for themselves about what leaders have told them. They receive training to ensure that they are effective in their role through the multi-academy trust (MAT). Additionally, they benefit from sharing good practice with other local academy committees within the trust.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that the safeguarding of pupils is a high priority. Regular up-to-date training is provided for all staff who work at the academy. This includes specific training that relates to the prevalent safeguarding concerns in the wider community. All staff understand their responsibilities, and they report any concerns they have promptly.
- Governors understand their safeguarding responsibilities because they receive child protection training. They carry out termly checks of the school's single central register, and several members are trained to ensure that safe recruitment practices are followed.
- Pupils report that they feel safe in school. They told inspectors that they feel well looked after and able to talk to an adult about anything that worries them. Staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire strongly agreed that pupils are safe.

- Leaders ensure that child protection records are stored securely. They are well organised and contain the relevant information needed to support vulnerable pupils as effectively as possible.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Since the academy opened, leaders have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers have a secure knowledge of a range of subjects across the curriculum, and they use this to plan lessons that reflect what must be taught in each year group. As a result, most of the teaching in the academy is good. This is beginning to have an impact on pupils' outcomes particularly in phonics and mathematics.
- In some classes, in a variety of subjects, a high proportion of pupils are working at standards below those typical for their age. Teachers use assessment information to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, and they use this to plan interesting lessons that help pupils to catch up to the standards that they should be working at. However, teachers do not take sufficient account of what the most able pupils can already do. Sometimes, tasks for these pupils are too easy and, as a result, the most able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work in partnership to provide high-quality support for less-able pupils. Work is well matched to the needs of this group of pupils. Consequently, less-able pupils make strong progress in a variety of subjects across the curriculum.
- Teachers ensure that pupils learn and practise basic mathematical skills. There are regular opportunities for pupils to apply these skills when solving problems in a range of mathematical topics. Pupils' books show that they also have opportunities to reason about their work. Occasionally, their explanations can be too long and lack clarity, but improvements in this skill over time are evident.
- The teaching of phonics is good. Pupils apply their knowledge of the sounds that letters make when they are reading words and sentences. However, too many pupils in key stage 1 do not read with fluency. This means that, sometimes, these pupils struggle to demonstrate how well they have understood what they have read.
- Leaders have made changes to the way reading is taught in key stage 2. Pupils share whole-class texts that promote interest and provide appropriate challenge. Pupils are highly engaged in reading lessons and particularly enjoy learning new vocabulary and the meanings behind unfamiliar language. Teachers plan questions that require pupils to demonstrate how well they have understood the text. Although teachers consider the needs of all of their pupils, often the most able pupils must complete work that they find easy before they can begin more difficult tasks. Therefore, this group of pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to write through tasks linked to shared reading texts and to topics across a variety of subjects in the curriculum. Pupils' books show that they are now building an understanding of grammar, punctuation and spelling appropriate to the year group they work in. However, pupils often make repeated mistakes linked to basic spellings and punctuation, and teachers do not consistently address common errors such as the incorrect use of tenses.

- Teachers have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong in almost all classes. Pupils want to do their best and, as a result, very little time in lessons is wasted.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online, and posters with internet safety messages are clearly displayed around the school. Pupils have complete confidence in the 'safeguarding superheroes', the team of staff who pupils say will help them with any problems that they experience.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of the importance of physical and emotional health. The benefits of exercise are promoted, and pupils' take-up of additional sports activities at lunchtime is high. Additionally, leaders ensure that they provide healthy choices at breaktime and lunchtime through the promotion of 'rainbow food', and this encourages pupils to choose fruit and vegetables in place of less healthy snacks.
- Pupils enjoy opportunities to take on additional responsibilities, for example as playground buddies and as school council members. They are confident that adults listen to and consider their requests. Pupils are pleased that the school council members secured new playground equipment for everyone.
- Pupils develop a good knowledge and understanding of British values. This is because of well-planned opportunities to learn about different cultures and religions in Britain. Additionally, pupils have an appreciation of the value of democracy and free speech. Pupils say teachers encourage them to share their own opinions through a school voting system.
- Most pupils take pride in their work and always try their best. However, some pupils' presentation is not as good as it could be, because some teachers do not have consistently high expectations of the work that pupils produce.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and most tackle tasks with enthusiasm. Pupils told inspectors that their work is interesting and that they welcome the changes that leaders have made so that the tasks they are given are harder than in the past.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and as they move around the school. The school is an orderly environment. Pupils contribute to individual class rules, and they demonstrate a good understanding of the whole school rules. Pupils said that almost everybody behaves well and that teachers apply the rules fairly when they are not followed.
- Leaders work hard to ensure that pupils attend regularly. They promote and celebrate good attendance in displays and during weekly assemblies. Additionally, leaders work

with families and external agencies when attendance issues arise. Over the last two years, attendance has been around the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is above the national average. However, because of action to support individual pupils and their families, this is now improving.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The progress of pupils throughout the school is improving but is not yet consistently good in each year group. Pupils in most year groups are making stronger progress in mathematics than in reading or writing.
- In 2018, there was an improvement in the progress made by pupils in key stage 2 in mathematics and all groups, including disadvantaged pupils, made strong progress. There was also improvement in pupils' progress in reading. However, lower-attaining pupils made less progress. Pupils' progress in writing declined in 2018 compared with 2017 and, as a result, too few pupils reached the standards of which they are capable.
- At both key stage 1 and key stage 2, over the last two years, the proportions of pupils reaching the average attainment for their age were below the national averages in reading and writing. Additionally, very few pupils were working at a higher level in reading and writing by the time they left key stage 2. As a result, half of the pupils who left key stage 2 in 2018 were not as well prepared academically, as they could have been, for the next stage in their education.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved greater depth at the end of key stage 1 in reading and mathematics improved in 2018. However, proportions remain below the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils made less progress than other pupils in all subjects in key stage 2 in 2017 and 2018. Additionally, disadvantaged pupils attained less well than other pupils at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 in each subject. However, assessment information shows that these differences are reducing, and, in some classes, disadvantaged pupils are now making strong progress in some subjects.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 was above the national average.
- Current pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their low starting points.
- Pupils in all year groups are developing their knowledge in a range of subjects across the curriculum. In 2018, there was a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 who were working at the level typical for their age in science. However, the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged and do not have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge in the subjects that they study. Therefore, they do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Early years provision

Good

- A high proportion of children enter the early years with skills and abilities which are below those typical for their age. Over the last two years, the proportion of children

who achieve a good level of development has been broadly in line with national averages. Children, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress across the early years. Very few children reach standards above those expected for their age. In response to this, the early years leader ensures that planned tasks include opportunities for challenge for the most able children.

- The early years leader provides strong leadership. She knows the setting well and constantly seeks to improve the provision for children further. As a result, adults benefit from carefully planned training, and this has a positive impact on the progress that children make. Additional funding is used well to target specific needs, for example the use of speech and language therapists to support children who have difficulty with verbal communication. High adult-to-child ratios provide additional support to disadvantaged children and for those who have skills and abilities that are well below those typical for their age across the curriculum.
- Adults ensure that planned activities take account of children's interests. As a result, children engage in tasks with enthusiasm. Additionally, there is a tight focus on the development of children's basic skills. Adults teach phonics consistently well so that children learn basic letter sounds and apply these in the early stages of independent reading and writing.
- The organised, attractive, learning environment is inviting and supports learning indoors and outside. Resources are easily accessible and promote children's creativity, investigation and exploration. Adults do all they can to develop children's understanding of the world around them. For example, children in the Nursery were very excited to explore the sounds that different musical instruments make.
- Children behave well because routines and expectations are established and clear. Most children demonstrate good cooperation with each other. They are happy to take turns and they listen to what others are saying. Relationships are strong because adults know children well. Adults provide constant encouragement to children and, as a result, children become confident individuals who are willing to try new things.
- Safeguarding in the early years is effective and adults ensure that the statutory welfare requirements are met. Adults are well trained to ensure that children are safe.
- Adults communicate with parents to ensure that they are involved in their child's learning. Learning journeys include examples of activities completed at home, and parent's contributions are valued. Parents say that their children are happy to come to school and that they are well cared for.

School details

Unique reference number	144499
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10053586

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	243
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr David Bickley
Executive principal	Miss Amy Bills
Telephone number	01922 720 822
Website	www.nwpa.atrust.org.uk
Email address	abills@nwpa.atrust.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- North Walsall Primary converted to academy status in April 2016, and this is its first inspection since conversion. It is one of the 22 academies that are part of the Academy Transformation Trust. The executive principal also manages another school within the trust.
- North Walsall Primary has a head of academy and an assistant principal. In September, a new chair of the local academy committee was appointed. He is a chair of another school within the trust.
- Each school has its own local academy committee. The committee reports directly to the trust board. The board of trustees, through the scheme of delegation and funding agreement with the Department for Education, has oversight of all the academies within the trust. The board has responsibility for all the management and devolvement of governance, finance and human resources for each academy.
- Senior leaders and governors work in close partnership across the academy trust.

There are opportunities for training and development of staff, for sharing best practice and for moderating assessments of pupils' work and progress.

- This is a smaller-than-average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. Some observations were carried out with the executive principal and some were carried out with the head of academy. Inspectors scrutinised a range of pupils' work alongside subject leaders.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about the work they do at school. Inspectors also talked to pupils about their opinions of behaviour and safety. There were no pupil responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered a range of school documents. These included the school's self-evaluation, assessment information, improvement plans and records relating to behaviour, attendance and the safeguarding of pupils. In addition, inspectors scrutinised documents relating to the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.
- Inspectors spoke to parents to gather their views and took account of the 11 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors also took account of the 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jo Evans, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Chris Ogden

Ofsted Inspector

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