

Inspection of a good school: West Walker Primary School

326 Church Street, Walker, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE6 3XW

Inspection dates:

21–22 January 2020

Outcome

West Walker Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils told me that they love coming to school. The outdoor facilities capture pupils' interest. Pupils value the after-school clubs, especially wildlife and science clubs. Every day, a member of staff leads investigations into the activities of wildlife in the school grounds. During the inspection, pupils collected evidence of squirrels living nearby. Using binoculars, they were fascinated by a greater spotted woodpecker drumming on the trees in the school's forest area. The school is a positive and bright place. Adults ensure that there is an emphasis on outdoor and investigative learning, especially in science and mathematics.

Pupils talk affectionately about their teachers and their lessons. They told me that pupils' behaviour is usually good and that there is no bullying. Any misbehaviour is dealt with quickly by adults who are calm and fair. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and not give up. This helps them to achieve well.

Pupils told me about all the things that make them safe in school. They described 'lockdowns' and fire drills. Pupils work hard and like the idea of adding up 'class points' to earn themselves a reward. Playtimes are happy times. At lunchtimes, pupils build and play with a variety of recyclable materials such as crates, netting, tubing and cones. This is part of the school's accredited 'outdoor play and learning' initiative.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Since the last inspection, leaders have improved many parts of the curriculum. There has been a focus on reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils understand the important concepts in these subjects. Teachers are clear about what pupils need to learn. Lessons build on what pupils know. Teaching in mathematics is particularly strong. Pupils use and apply their mathematics skills in reasoning and problem-solving tasks. Pupils achieve well.

Leaders are committed to making pupils' early reading skills even better. In the two-year-old provision, children are independent and explore their environment with curiosity. They listen carefully to adults. Speaking is at the forefront of most activities. Adults model language and

engage children skilfully. In Nursery, children listened carefully to each other discussing their clay 'bog art'. They had made this using clay, sticks and natural materials. Young children are developing good listening skills as they get ready to learn to read.

In Reception and Year 1, teachers ensure that pupils learn, remember and blend sounds together. If pupils fall behind, they are given extra support. Reading books are well matched to pupils' reading skills. Adults listen to pupils read often. Phonics teaching is effective but could be stronger. Plans are in place and resources have been ordered to make sure that phonics teaching is more consistent and systematic. Expectations of pupils' reading skills could be even higher. A greater proportion of pupils should be able to read by the time they leave Year 1.

Leaders have made sure that learning is well planned and sequenced in subjects such as science and geography. In these subjects, important ideas are taught in the right order to make sure that pupils gain the knowledge and skills they need. Teachers plan lessons in a way that helps pupils to remember what they have been taught. Pupils make sense of new learning because they can understand how it fits with what they already know. This is especially the case in mathematics, for example. Leaders are working to ensure that this is the case for all subjects. The school's curriculum is not yet sufficiently coherently planned and sequenced in all subjects. It is clear from the actions that leaders have already taken to plan next year's curriculum that they are in the process of bringing this about.

The school supports pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. All pupils with SEND have access to the good quality curriculum. In the resource base, dedicated and skilled staff meet pupils' individual needs. Adults make sure that activities and resources are matched to pupils' abilities. This promotes pupils' good development.

Behaviour in every area of school is good. Children in the early years are independent and creative. They are eager to make friends and find out new things. Children are getting off to a flying start in the two-year-old provision. Children in Nursery are settled, independent and developing good listening and speaking skills. Pupils' behaviour in all classes, in the hall and at breaktimes is calm and sensible. They are friendly, polite and well mannered. In lessons, pupils are bright, alert and enthusiastic. They are determined to succeed.

Leaders are determined to improve pupils' attendance. A great deal of work has been done to identify issues and plan innovative actions to address them. These include a free breakfast club, wildlife activities in the forest area, den building, science club and lunchtime nature activities. The parent support officer is the driving force behind these activities. Early signs are that attendance is improving. Yet, there is some way to go before pupils' rates of attendance match those found nationally.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained and know how to keep children safe. The regular updates for staff from leaders give them information about risks to watch out for. All staff, including those

with designated responsibility for safeguarding, know pupils and their families well. They are vigilant in their oversight of pupils' welfare and safety. The work of expert staff is invaluable in supporting pupils' social and emotional needs. Where appropriate, staff communicate with outside agencies when raising concerns. Pupils have detailed knowledge about the dangers they may meet outside of school and how to avoid these. Year 6 pupils speak enthusiastically about the safety workshop they attended.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have made sure that the curriculum is becoming more coherently planned and sequenced. Some plans show that key ideas and concepts are carefully organised so that pupils' learning builds progressively. This is especially the case in science and geography, as well as in English and mathematics. This is not the case in all subjects. Some pupils struggle to remember the content they have been taught over time in some subjects. These pupils cannot explain how previous learning helps them with the new learning they are taught. Leaders must make sure that all teaching is designed and delivered to help pupils remember important knowledge and skills so that pupils can make sense of the new learning they are acquiring. Further work must be completed to ensure that the curriculum in all subjects is strong.
- Over time, there have been some inconsistencies in the teaching of phonics. This has hindered pupils' early reading development. Leaders must make sure that teaching strategies and resources are implemented consistently and embedded. Leaders must ensure that adults' expectations of pupils' early reading skills are raised further and that teaching in the early years and key stage 1 is systematic and consistent.
- Leaders have introduced many new and innovative strategies to improve pupils' rates of attendance. However, attendance rates remain too low. Every effort must continue to be made so that pupils' rates of attendance improve, and the proportion of persistent absentees reduces.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, West Walker Primary School to be good on 16–17 September 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	144269
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10121769
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	238
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees for Newcastle East Mixed Multi Academy Trust
Chair of governing body	Susan McGowan
Headteacher	Nichola Draper
Website	www.westwalker.newcastle.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school is slightly smaller than an average-sized primary school. It joined the Newcastle East Mixed Multi Academy Trust in 2017.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club for pupils.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is nearly three times the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- A resourced provision for six pupils who have emotional, social or mental health needs is provided.

Information about this inspection

- I met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, subject leaders and other members of staff, including the parent support officer and the primary welfare officer.

- As lead inspector, I met with a group of governors, including the chair of the local governing body. I also met with the chief executive officer of Newcastle East Mixed Multi Academy Trust.
- I took account of the school's questionnaire for parents and carers in November 2019. I looked at two parents' free-text comments on Ofsted's parent questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered 28 responses from staff to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at playtimes. I gathered pupils' views about the school through formal and informal discussions.
- I considered a wide range of documentation, including subject plans and safeguarding documents. I also looked at information relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- I completed deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and science. This included discussions with leaders of the subjects, visits to lessons, discussions with teachers, scrutiny of pupils' work, listening to pupils read and discussions with pupils.

Inspection team

Phil Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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