

Inspection of Walkern Primary School

High Street, Walkern, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG2 7NS

Inspection dates: 25–26 February 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Walkern pupils are polite and welcoming. Classrooms are busy places. Most pupils enjoy school and are confident to speak about their work. Pupils generally get on well together. Older pupils enjoy acting as 'helpers' in the dining hall during lunch. The school council plays an active role in representing the views of other pupils to staff and senior leaders.

Most pupils behave well. They say that bullying is rare but sometimes there is some 'falling out'. Pupils trust staff to help to sort out any concerns. They work cooperatively in lessons as they discuss their learning in pairs or in small groups. They like reading their books and hearing the stories that their teachers read to them at the end of each school day. Children in the Reception class are curious about the world around them. They are enthusiastic, eager learners.

Many parents told me that the school is a caring and close-knit community. Pupils are taught how to keep healthy and make the right choices. Across the school, pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics have improved. In some subjects, pupils do not get enough opportunities to build on what they already know in the most logical order.

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

Senior leaders and governors have ensured that pupils have the chance to learn across the full range of primary subjects. They are ambitious for all pupils in the school.

Some pupils did not do as well as they should in reading and writing by the end of key stage 2 last year. Leaders have acted quickly to make the changes needed. Books show that gaps in older pupils' learning are closing. Pupils' vocabulary and understanding of more complex text are improving. Pupils are more confident to write at length and with increasing accuracy.

Pupils are excited by the interesting range of new books in school. They read regularly together with their teachers and teaching assistants. A love of reading is promoted widely across the school. Pupils who may be at risk of falling behind are given support to help them catch up quickly.

In mathematics and English, teachers' planning makes sure that pupils gain knowledge and skills in a logical order. Pupils get regular opportunities to revisit and practise the things that they already know so they remember more. Pupils are increasingly confident to use mathematical vocabulary when explaining how to solve problems and in remembering times tables.

Children in the Reception class get off to a good start with their early reading and mathematics. They understand the sounds that letters make. They know this helps

them to read and begin to write new words. They practise reading with books that are closely matched to the sounds that they are learning. The indoor and outdoor spaces are lively and interesting places to explore new ideas. Children were excited as adults encouraged them to think carefully about the difference adding mud and water made to the dam they were building outside.

In the foundation subjects, such as in geography and science, teachers' longer-term planning is not as advanced as it is in English and mathematics. Teachers are working to pinpoint the important knowledge and skills that pupils should learn and in what sequence. In history, for example, leaders' own checks on learning show that pupils do not know enough about historical timelines. Plans are being adapted to make sure that pupils deepen their understanding, remember and can make important links between key historical events.

Pupils like the way their successes are celebrated in assemblies. Behaviour is generally good because pupils understand adults' expectations and want to do well. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities and playing a part in improving the school environment. The school council, for example, was successful in a recent bid to support the development of the school's sensory garden, linked to pupils' well-being and healthy young minds.

Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive appropriate support. This allows almost all of them to have the same chances to learn and make progress as other pupils. Leaders take steps to ensure that pupils with the most complex needs get specialist help. However, learning plans are not routinely focused closely on the small steps pupils need to make to achieve well.

Additional training has improved the way governors challenge and hold senior leaders to account for the school's performance. Staff value the consideration leaders give to their well-being. They are proud to be members of the school team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Keeping pupils safe is a high priority. Safeguarding training for all staff is updated regularly. All the required pre-employment checks are completed for new staff. Staff understand what to do if there are concerns that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Information about concerns is appropriately recorded, but documents are not always stored in the most logical way. Pupils are confident that staff look after them well. Parents agree that their children are safe in the school. Leaders are persistent in their work with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils get the support they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is not yet coherently planned and sequenced across all subjects. This means that pupils sometimes find it hard to remember or make connections with what they learned before. However, work is underway to address this. In foundation subjects, leaders should ensure that plans are refined so that they make the sequence and detail of knowledge and skills consistently clear. Any additional subject-specific training that staff need should be completed quickly.
- Learning plans for some pupils with SEND are not specific enough. In these cases, learning over time does not focus precisely on the small steps needed to move pupils on quickly. Leaders should ensure that learning targets are sharply focused and reviewed regularly with all parties concerned so that all pupils achieve well.

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	117154
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10121354
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	127
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Louise Parkinson
Headteacher	Jonty Hall
Website	www.walkern.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND has increased since the previous inspection and is now above the national average.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the headteacher, curriculum leaders, including the school’s special educational needs coordinator, the school improvement partner, the chair of the governing body and her deputy.
- We also spoke with representatives from the local authority on the telephone about the school’s provision for pupils with SEND.
- We visited a range of lessons and looked at learning plans. We spoke with pupils and staff. We also looked at pupils’ work in books.
- We checked the school’s website and policies, including the school’s child protection policy. We met with the school’s designated safeguarding officer and

spoke with staff and pupils. We also checked the school's records of safer recruitment of staff.

- We looked at the 37 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the comments that parents made through Ofsted's free-text service. The 18 responses to Ofsted's survey for school staff and 48 responses to the survey for pupils were also reviewed.
- We considered the following subjects as part of the inspection: mathematics, geography, reading and science.
- The transition arrangements for the quality of education apply to this inspection.

Inspection team

Christine Dick, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sally Nutman

Ofsted Inspector

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