

Inspection of Thomas Walling Primary Academy

Lindfield Avenue, Blakelaw, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE5 3PL

Inspection dates: 19–20 May 2021

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	Serious Weaknesses

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that they are proud to belong to this warm and welcoming school. They are polite and well mannered. Leaders expect pupils to work hard and be respectful. Pupils rise to that challenge. They relish opportunities to take on pupil roles and responsibilities. They talk with pride about being a member of the school council or a 'Friendship Ambassador'. Pupils told inspectors that the curriculum is interesting. In many subjects, pupils remember important facts and knowledge that they learn over time.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They know what to do if bullying occurs, but they say that it rarely happens. Pupils say 'worry jars' in every class work well to share their concerns with adults. They trust that staff will deal with any incidents of bad behaviour in a fair and prompt manner.

Pupils respect the 'skills builder' values. Pupils have the opportunity to develop skills as part of their personal development. These include teamwork, staying positive, listening, creativity and leadership. Adults are strong role models in these areas.

The vast majority of parents and carers appreciate the support that their children receive. This includes for those children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

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

Leaders share a determination to provide the best possible education to all pupils. Leaders have designed a coherent, well-planned curriculum which sets high expectations for all pupils. With the support of the trust, leaders have invested heavily in high-quality professional development for staff. As a result, staff have a good understanding of relevant educational research. Teachers plan the curriculum in a way that helps pupils to remember the most important parts of their lessons.

Leaders of English and mathematics have secure subject knowledge. They set ambitious goals for pupils to reach in their learning. Pupils use the knowledge they learn in previous lessons to help them solve problems. For example, pupils applied their knowledge about the properties of triangles to solve unknown angles. Pupils edit their own writing. They apply their secure phonics knowledge to become competent at spelling. Pupils take great pride in their written work.

Leaders measure how much pupils remember at certain points across each year group. In English, mathematics and science, leaders also find out what pupils know at the end of each academic year. This is not established in other subjects, although leaders have plans to implement this.

The teaching of phonics and reading is now a strength of the curriculum. Children get off to a good start learning to read in Reception. They further develop their phonics knowledge, and confidence as readers, across Years 1 and 2. Adults have systems in place to check when pupils are falling behind in their reading. Staff provide additional reading or phonics sessions. This helps pupils to catch up, and keep up, with their peers. Once pupils have mastered their phonics knowledge, they quickly become fluent readers. The inviting reading areas around the school captivate the reading enthusiast. Pupils talk zealously about their favourite books and authors.

The leader of early years has a good understanding of how young children learn. Staff in the early years classrooms have developed a safe and inviting learning environment. Both indoors and outside, children can practise their reading, writing and mathematics in real life contexts. For example, children in Reception carefully wrote down a recipe for the potions they made in the mud kitchen. This included counting the amount of ingredients they needed and spelling out the words.

Teachers adapt their curriculum plans to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Staff provide targeted, in-class support for this group of pupils. Support plans for pupils with SEND include timely recommendations for pupils' next steps for success.

Curriculum plans include teaching pupils how to keep healthy and fit. Pupils are respectful of different faiths and cultures. The 'welfare team' of staff provide support for pupils with additional social and emotional needs. The nurture provision supports identified pupils every lunchtime. Pupils learn the importance of developing positive friendships. They show tolerance and mutual respect for one another. However, pupils cannot articulate their understanding of equalities and protected characteristics.

The executive headteacher has provided effective support to the senior leaders. The trust has provided development for aspiring leaders. Governors are not afraid to hold leaders to account. They waste no time in taking on board advice to further develop their own skills. Staff appreciate how leaders and governors are mindful of staff's workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders oversee thorough checks when recruiting staff and volunteers. All leaders understand how this vigilance keeps children safe. Staff know that keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility. The welfare team supports vulnerable pupils and their families.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. They understand the systems that adults have in place to protect them. They learn how to be vigilant when working or playing online. All parents who shared their views stated that their children feel safe in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' curriculum plans provide ways to expand pupils' personal development. Pupils show an understanding of tolerance and mutual respect. However, pupils are not as competent at articulating clearly their understanding of equalities and protected characteristics. Leaders should ensure that their curriculum plans are adapted to improve pupils' understanding of these areas.
- Assessment of pupils' work is fully in place for English, mathematics and science. Leaders can check how well pupils learn across each year and across the school. This is not as well established for other curriculum subjects. Leaders should sharpen their assessment of foundation subjects, such as history and geography, to support the transition between the different year groups.

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 [here](#).

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	140788
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10184596
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	408
Appropriate authority	Board of Trustees
Chair of trust	Susanna Kempe
Headteacher	Rebecca Hann (Head of School)
Website	www.thomaswallingacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	23 February 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Thomas Walling Primary Academy is part of The Laidlaw Schools Trust.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. Inspectors deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- During the inspection, inspectors met with the head of school, the executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the key stage one phase leader, the welfare leader, the early years leader and the special educational needs co-ordinator. Inspectors also met with representatives from the governing body, including the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of The Laidlaw Schools Trust.

- Inspectors met with a range of staff, including teachers and support staff, during the inspection. Inspectors considered 34 responses to Ofsted’s staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered 38 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, including 25 free-text responses received during the inspection.
- To check leaders’ management of safeguarding, inspectors read the relevant school policies, examined the single central record, considered the school’s procedures for the safer recruitment of staff and met the designated lead for safeguarding. Inspectors talked to staff and governors to check their views on safeguarding.
- The Nursery provides eight places for two-year-olds. They attend the nursery on mornings only.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils and looked at pupils’ work. Inspectors listened to pupils read to a familiar adult

Inspection team

Alison Aitchison, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Gill Wild

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Matthew Vellensworth

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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