

Inspection of Walney School

Sandy Gap Lane, Walney, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA14 3JT

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff are setting higher expectations for pupils at Walney School than they did previously. Staff are increasingly effective in encouraging pupils to be proud of themselves and to develop their character.

Leaders have appropriate aspirations about what pupils can achieve in the subjects that they study. However, pupils do not make the progress that they should in some subjects. This is because the curriculum lacks clarity about what pupils should learn.

Staff are ambitious about the behaviours and attitudes that they want pupils to exhibit. Many pupils contribute positively to this aspirational culture. Nonetheless, some pupils do not demonstrate the school's values in their daily behaviour as well as they should.

Most pupils feel that incidents of bullying and other unpleasant behaviours have reduced in recent years. However, pupils told inspectors that some pupils still persist in bullying others. Sometimes, pupils think it is funny to use derogatory or discriminatory language. Many pupils, but not all, are confident in what leaders and staff do to challenge the occasional incidents of pupils treating others poorly.

Pupils typically feel safe at Walney School. They feel that staff are friendly and approachable. Most pupils trust staff to look after them and keep them safe.

Pupils enjoy the additional opportunities that they are offered. Together, boys and girls participate fully in clubs and awareness days that increasingly promote the 'Walney Values' and the 'Walney Ways'. Pupils spoke proudly about being active contributors to their community.

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

Leaders are successfully taking steps to strengthen the quality of education that pupils receive as well as their behaviour and attitudes. Nonetheless, this work is not finished. There remains more to do to fully address the remaining weaknesses.

Leaders have ensured that most subjects in the key stage 3 curriculum better reflect the breadth and depth of the national curriculum than they did in the past. However, this is not true for all subjects. In a small number of subjects, leaders do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to build well on their previous learning and cover subject content in enough depth.

Pupils in key stage 4 have access to a suitably broad and balanced curriculum. However, few pupils currently take up this offer. This is because they have not progressed well in some subjects that they have studied in Years 7 to 9. Some pupils do not feel well prepared to study these subjects in key stage 4. Others have not had their interest piqued well enough to encourage them to gain a deeper insight

into the subject content. Leaders have suitable plans to further strengthen the quality and breadth of the curriculum that pupils of all ages follow.

Pupils benefit from carefully ordered units of work in most subjects. In some subjects, there is suitable clarity about the knowledge that pupils will learn. In these subjects, teachers plan activities and design assessment activities that are tightly linked to this knowledge. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge well to confidently deliver specific subject content.

Elsewhere, teachers do not have the information that they need to have the same positive impact on pupils' learning. In these subjects, teachers are less skilled at delivering and assessing pupils' progress through the curriculum. This means that some pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not make equal gains in what they know and remember across all the subjects that they study.

Leaders and governors do not have an accurate understanding of the progress that pupils are making in some subjects. Some of their evaluations are based on information that is not focused enough on what pupils know and remember in the subjects that they are studying.

Leaders ensure that the needs of pupils with SEND are accurately identified and appropriately passed to staff. Specialist staff provide additional support and nurture for pupils who need these. Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND benefit from the same curriculum content as others. Leaders are successfully supporting more teachers to provide effective support for these pupils in lessons. They have appropriate plans to ensure that pupils with SEND are supported equally well in all subjects.

Leaders and staff understand the needs of pupils who need more support with reading. Staff refine and adapt their support well to meet pupils' differing needs. Steadily, they are beginning to reduce the number of pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read. Through clear plans and actions, leaders demonstrate the capacity to ensure that more pupils can read with increasing fluency and comprehension.

Pupils benefit from a well-delivered personal development curriculum and an extensive range of other high-quality experiences. Consequently, pupils develop a sound understanding of health and well-being, relationships and living in the wider world. Pupils of all ages explore their future well through the 'Walney school employability passport'. They told inspectors how all of these opportunities positively influence their thinking and prepare them well for their future education and careers.

Increasingly, more pupils behave appropriately in class and around school. However, the behaviour of some pupils falls short of leaders' expectations. That said, leaders and staff have the knowledge and skills that they need to ensure that the

increasingly positive culture is further established and consistently embedded throughout the school.

Leaders have ensured that rates of overall absence have improved during this school year. However, even when taking account of the impact of absences due to the COVID-19 pandemic, rates of persistent absence remain too high. Leaders' interventions often have a positive impact on the attendance of some pupils for a short period of time. However, many of these improvements are not successfully sustained.

Staff believe that leaders are approachable. They said that leaders are always ready to listen to them and understand, and they support their professional development. They feel that leaders are responsive to staff workload or other pressures that occasionally arise.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff ensure that pupils get regular opportunities to learn about staying safe. Pupils believe that they are well informed on how to stay safe. They can confidently explain how their learning has influenced the approaches that they take to avoid risks to their well-being.

Staff have a good understanding of the safeguarding risks that pupils might face. They confidently recognise important signs that could indicate that pupils are vulnerable. They have appropriate knowledge of how to report and record concerns about safeguarding.

Leaders provide prompt support to pupils and families when concerns are identified. They work effectively with other safeguarding partners. Leaders regularly review and thoughtfully refine the support that they provide to vulnerable pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is variation in how well subject curriculums identify the knowledge that pupils will learn. This means that some teachers do not have the information that they need to ensure that activities are suitably demanding. Additionally, this lack of specificity means that some teachers do not design assessment activities that are focused enough on the intended learning. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum in all subjects identifies the knowledge that pupils should learn. Leaders should provide teachers with the support that they need to ensure that lesson activities and assessment activities are designed around this important knowledge, so that they can be sure that pupils know and remember more.

- Leaders' approaches to reducing persistent absence are not securing sustainable improvements. Rates of persistent absence are still too high. They are not reducing quickly enough. This means that many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are not benefiting from the full education that they need. Leaders should ensure that strategies to reduce absence can be sustained over a long enough period to change the culture of attendance for pupils.
- Leaders and governors do not evaluate the quality of education carefully enough. Often, they draw conclusions about the quality of education from information that may be inaccurate or invalid. Consequently, they mistakenly think that some pupils are making better progress through the curriculum than is the case. Leaders and governors should ensure that they base their evaluations about the quality of education on meaningful information about what pupils know and remember in the subjects that they are studying.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	141041
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10216069
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	506
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Tony Sinton
Headteacher	John Richardson
Website	www.walneyschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 and 8 November 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Walney School is part of The Queen Katherine School Multi-Academy Trust.
- Leaders use two alternative providers to provide part-time education for a small number of pupils.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection that a serious incident that occurred at the setting since the previous inspection is under investigation by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the incident were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

This was the first routine inspection that the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders. They met with representatives of the academy trust, the local governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, geography, art and design, and French. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, considered the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum, assessment activities and pupils' work in a range of other, additional subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals. They met with leaders who have overall responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about the school's work to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders responsible for pupils with SEND and reading. They also looked at information about the support for pupils with additional needs.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class and around the school site. They also scrutinised behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from all year groups and considered the responses of pupils who had completed Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses of staff who had completed Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View, including the comments received through Ofsted's free-text facility.
- Inspectors also considered the views of other stakeholders who had contacted Ofsted during the inspection.

Inspection team

Michael Pennington, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Elaine Mawson	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Edmondson	Ofsted Inspector

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