

Inspection of a good school: Walworth School

Bluebell Way, Newton Aycliffe DL5 7LP

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 September 2023

Outcome

Walworth School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' behaviour at Walworth School is exemplary. All staff have high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour. Staff teach pupils how to manage their feelings and be kind to one another. Pupils value this and the additional support that they receive from other health professionals when they feel anxious or worried. They say that this helps them to feel calm.

Pupils receive a warm welcome when they arrive at the beginning of the school day. Adults check that they are happy. Pupils are confident to speak to adults if they are worried or need help, which is quickly given. They know that staff care about them. This has helped to create a 'Walworth family' culture. These positive relationships built on mutual respect and trust ensure that pupils feel safe and are happy and ready to learn.

Pupils enjoy taking part in a range of activities and festivals. These include orienteering, wellness activities, games, alternate sports and tri-golf. This helps to build pupils' confidence. The summer fête and prom are annual events that all pupils look forward to.

Pupils have regular opportunities to influence and change aspects of the school's offer. They discuss topics through the 'smart council', such as which new activities they would like to participate in during lunchtime.

Adults' understanding of pupils' wishes and interests enables them to personalise their experiences. For example, some pupils have opportunities to help members of the school team who act as their role model for the day, such as the caretaker and receptionists.

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

Leaders have raised expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils enjoy lessons and take pride in the work that they produce. They are happy to participate in class discussions and share their ideas, particularly when discussing topics in personal, social and health education (PSHE), such as family. Through PSHE, pupils learn fundamental

knowledge and skills that help them to develop as well-rounded individuals. This includes learning about relationships, including what makes a good friend. They learn how to stay safe both on- and offline, as well as about topics that contribute to their social and emotional development.

Pupils enjoy learning to read. They have a range of books that they can choose from in order to spark their love of reading. They participate in every lesson, eager to show their teacher what they know. Many pupils start school unable to read. They quickly grasp new sounds and progress rapidly. This is a result of effective planning and delivery of lessons by staff who receive regular training. Pupils read every day. Staff quickly correct any mispronunciation of letters and words. Pupils gain confidence and learn to read with fluency and accuracy.

In most subjects, the important knowledge that pupils need to learn is successfully identified. Teachers plan activities that help pupils to stay on task and be ready to learn. Teachers check what pupils know. Pupils receive support when they have not understood what has been taught. As a result, pupils progress well. However, in a small number of subjects, the exact knowledge that pupils should remember is not clear enough. This makes it difficult for teachers to check what pupils have learned. In addition, staff have not received training to help them plan activities in these few subjects that will enable pupils to remember the content.

The mental health and well-being of pupils are of the utmost priority. The school has introduced a new 'relational and supporting behaviour policy'. Staff receive extensive training to enable them to support effectively those pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Staff help pupils to understand that rewards can make them feel good about themselves. This contributes towards a calm and purposeful environment in which pupils want to do well. Pupils who are new to the school, and who in many cases have previously had a negative experience of education, quickly settle and thrive. Pupils beam when they receive 'Well-being Wednesday' certificates for the positive behaviours they display.

Leaders carefully plan opportunities for pupils to engage in a range of experiences, such as visits to the beach or museums or trips to the theatre. This helps to promote pupils' cultural and social development.

Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and what they need to do to develop it further. They offer a good level of challenge that results in improvements in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few foundation subjects, the exact knowledge that pupils need to learn is not planned precisely enough. This means that staff cannot check gaps in pupils' learning. Some staff do not have the necessary skills to plan activities that will help pupils remember what they are being taught. As a result, pupils miss opportunities to learn crucial knowledge. Leaders should continue to develop their curriculum in these subjects, ensuring that staff have appropriate training to enable them to deliver this effectively.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2018.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	114341
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10255907
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kenneth Flynn
Headteacher	Roland Cooke
Website	www.walworth.durham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been substantial changes to staffing since the previous inspection. There are several new teachers and learning support assistants. There is a new headteacher and deputy headteacher, who have been in post since September 2021.
- The school is a special school that caters for pupils with SEMH needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- There have been no children in early years for the past three years.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

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

- This inspection was carried out at the same time as an inspection of the school's residential provision.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in early reading, mathematics, physical education and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders and staff, visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders about actions taken since the previous inspection. The lead inspector spoke to members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority about their work with the school.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read books to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times during the day.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors used the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and responses from staff and pupils through their respective surveys to evaluate how leaders engage with the wider community.

Inspection team

Jenny Thomas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mary Cook

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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