

Inspection of Higher Walton Church of England Primary School

Rosewood Avenue, Higher Walton, Preston, Lancashire PR5 4FE

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Everyone is made to feel welcome at this inclusive school. Being ready, respectful and safe are at the heart of the school's ambition for its pupils. Pupils value the caring relationships that they have with staff. Pupils trust that staff will help them with any concerns that they may have. This helps pupils to feel happy at school.

Pupils generally work hard in lessons and enjoy their learning. The school has high ambitions for all pupils to achieve well. However, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not achieve as well as they should in a number of curriculum subjects. Added to this, some pupils are frequently absent from school. This further hinders these pupils' learning.

Pupils value the opportunities that they have to take on responsibilities such as being school librarians or playground friends to younger peers. They also enjoy attending the clubs that are available, such as football, science and multi-skills. That said, leadership opportunities for pupils are limited. The school does not make pupils' personal development a priority. Pupils are not as well prepared for life in modern Britain as they should be.

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

Previously, children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 did not achieve as well as they should in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has taken action to improve how the curriculum is taught in these subjects. Most pupils, including those with SEND, are benefiting from these improvements. The school has identified the gaps in knowledge that some pupils have as a result of historical weaknesses and these are being addressed. Nevertheless, in 2023, too many pupils were not well prepared for their move to the next key stage or to high school.

In some subjects, other than English and mathematics, teachers benefit from a range of high-quality training. In these subjects, the school has set out the important knowledge that pupils should learn and when they should learn it. This helps teachers to design appropriate activities that deepen pupils' subject knowledge. In these subjects, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to revisit previous content when needed, before moving on to new learning. In the early years, the school has considered the important knowledge that children in the Nursery Year should learn in readiness for the Reception Year curriculum.

In a number of other curriculum subjects, the important knowledge that pupils should learn across the school is unclear. This includes in the Reception Year, as some subject curriculums do not set out what these children should know, so that they are ready for the demands of Year 1. This makes it tricky for teachers to know what they should prioritise when designing learning activities. As a result, pupils' knowledge in these subjects is insecure and underdeveloped.

Staff are well trained in teaching phonics. Staff check to see if pupils need extra help with their phonics learning. These pupils benefit from additional support delivered by skilled staff. The books that pupils read closely match the sounds that they have learned. Pupils use effective strategies to read unfamiliar words. They are determined and focused when reading. The school communicates well with parents and carers on how to support their child's reading at home. Most pupils read with confidence by the end of key stage 1.

The school has effective systems in place to identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND. Carefully considered support and resources ensure that pupils with SEND progress through the same curriculum as their peers.

Children in the early years quickly learn the school rules and routines. For example, they listen carefully to staff and are keen to help during tidy-up time. Most pupils across the school are attentive in lessons and keen to learn. Lessons generally proceed without disruption. When lessons are taught by someone who is not the class teacher, some pupils do not maintain the school's high expectations of behaviour. This causes some learning to be disrupted.

Some pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are too often absent from school. This has a negative impact on how well these pupils learn. Until very recently, improving levels of attendance has not been a priority of the school. The recent systems put in place are helping the school to understand and address the reasons behind some absences. However, improvements are at an early stage.

Pupils have a strong moral view on the importance of treating others with respect, regardless of their differences. They understand how to keep themselves safe online. Nevertheless, pupils do not experience a sufficient range of high-quality personal development opportunities. For example, the school has not ensured that some pupils know and understand British values. In addition, some aspects of the relationships and health education curriculum are not taught effectively. Pupils are not as well prepared to grow up in modern Britain as they should be.

Governors carry out their legal duties effectively. That said, they do not provide the required support and challenge to the school on the quality of education. This limits their impact on improving the school's effectiveness and has contributed to a decline since the last inspection.

There has been significant turbulence in the leadership of the school since the previous inspection. Most staff state that the school has been considerate of their workload and well-being during times of change and when putting in place new policies and procedures. Staff value the training they have had in helping them to implement these new initiatives.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not identified the key knowledge that pupils in the early years to Year 6 should learn across a number of curriculum subjects. This hinders teachers from designing learning that builds up pupils' knowledge over time. The school should ensure that they finalise their curriculum thinking so that it is clear what pupils should learn and when this knowledge should be taught.
- The school's programme for personal development is limited. Pupils do not learn all that they should to be ready for life in modern Britain. The school should ensure that pupils experience a range of high-quality personal development opportunities that prepare them for the society in which they live.
- Governors do not hold the school to account for the quality of education. This limits their impact on school improvement. Governors should ensure that they access appropriate training to enable them to provide effective challenge and support.
- Persistent absence and overall absence rates are high. Too many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not attend school often enough. This limits how well these pupils learn. The school should take action to reduce levels of absence.

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	119393
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10268112
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Denise Sanderson and Katherine Pugh
Headteacher	Vicki Clarke
Website	www.walton.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 June 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Church of England primary school in the Diocese of Blackburn. It was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in September 2019. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place by the end of 2027.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a significant period of time during which the school has not had a substantive headteacher. During this period, the school received external support from the local authority and the diocese.
- The school recently appointed a substantive headteacher who took up post on 30 October 2023.
- The school make use of one registered alternative provision.
- The governing body operates a breakfast club and after-school provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors completed deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. As part of the deep dives, the inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited lessons, met with teachers and looked at pupils' work. The inspectors also looked at the curriculum and pupils' work in some other subjects. The lead inspector observed some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the co-chairs of governors. He also spoke with representatives of the local authority and the diocese.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record and took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils. They also considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons. They spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. They also considered the views of pupils shared through Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- The inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's online staff survey.
- The inspectors spoke with some parents. They considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

David Robinson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Valmai Roberts

Ofsted Inspector

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