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John Richardson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Richardson

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Walney School**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 13 December 2023, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school has received a judgement of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspection.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the CEO of the trust, trustees, governors and your school improvement partner the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also carried out visits to lessons, met with staff, met with pupils, reviewed pupils' work and evaluated school documentation. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

### **Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.**

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that teachers check the knowledge that pupils know and address any gaps in their understanding before introducing new learning

- provide opportunities for pupils to deepen their learning by applying their knowledge to different contexts
- ensure that parents and carers are informed about the changes at the school and the difference that these are making to their children's education.

## **Main findings**

The school, with the support of the trust, has acted with determination to address the shortcomings that were identified at the previous inspection while being mindful of the implications on staff's workload and well-being. This is leading to a better quality of education for pupils.

The local governing body has undergone considerable change in its membership. Governors have also participated in a range of training opportunities. This work, alongside the support from the trust, is helping governors to improve their understanding of their roles. They are much better placed to offer appropriate challenge and support because they are keeping a secure overview of the school's progress and the impact of its actions. Even so, they have been less effective in ensuring that the impact of change on pupils' education has been shared with parents and carers.

Renewing the curriculum has been a clear focus since the last inspection. Subject leaders have benefitted from the support and training that they have received. This has enabled them to refine the subject curriculums so that it is clear what pupils will learn and when subject knowledge will be taught. The updated curriculums are being implemented across different subject departments. However, they are still relatively new. These changes did not have time to make a difference to pupils' success in the 2023 examinations at the end of Year 11.

The pupils currently at the school are learning more successfully than in the past. Pupils all follow the same curriculum, and they have regular opportunities to revisit what they have been taught. However, pupils' progress through the curriculums is variable. This is because some of them have gaps in their previous learning. In addition, there are too few opportunities for pupils to deepen their learning by applying their knowledge to different contexts.

To support the changes in the curriculum, teachers have benefitted from training in checking what pupils know and remember in order to address misconceptions. In some subject areas, the use of these strategies is further developed than in others. As a result, in some subjects, gaps in pupils' learning are not being identified and addressed. This means that some pupils are being introduced to new learning without having the prior knowledge that they need. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Reading has been prioritised by the school. Pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge when they join the school receive the support that they need to catch up with

their peers. This is making a real difference to younger pupils. However, some older pupils are reluctant to read outside of their lessons. Leaders are at the early stages of implementing a strategy to build a love of reading for pupils of all ages.

The school has raised its expectations for pupils' attendance. Attendance is improving, and the rates of persistent absence are declining. The school monitors the attendance of different groups of pupils carefully and takes appropriate action when required. Pupils value the reward trips now in place for their increased attendance.

The school has updated the structure and routines for lessons. Pupils and staff reported that behaviour and effort in lessons have improved as a result of these changes. Pupils are enjoying their lessons more than they were in the past.

The school has harnessed the support from the trust, and from external organisations, to build leadership capacity. This has led to positive changes in terms of the subject curriculums. The school has used the external support to help leaders and governors gain an accurate insight into the quality of education on offer.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the CEO of The Fells Trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Westmorland and Furness local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Eleanor Overland  
**His Majesty's Inspector**