

# Inspection of Walker Riverside Academy

Waverdale Avenue, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE6 4AW

---

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 September 2024
The quality of education	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Gareth Smith. This school is part of the Tyne Coast Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Mike Collier, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Les Watson.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are proud to attend their school. Being a member of Dobson, Grainger or Stephenson (the three 'schools within a school') fosters pupils' palpable sense of belonging. They feel safe and are well cared for. Pupils trust staff and turn to them for guidance and support.

Walker Riverside is a calm, purposeful place to learn. In lessons, the majority of pupils behave well. They are keen to learn and like that their good behaviour is recognised through the merit, 'shout out' and positive behaviour systems. Some pupils need extra help to meet the school's high expectations for their behaviour. Skilled staff provide this help, including through the 'positive support programme'. Occasionally, some pupils' behaviour falls below the standard expected. Teachers manage this in line with the 'firm but fair' approach.

Pupils' achievement in national assessments in 2023 was not strong. As a result of leaders' well-judged actions, the quality of education that pupils receive is improving but is not yet good.

Pupils develop a mature awareness of, and respect for, diversity and equality. They also become increasingly resilient as they benefit from opportunities to grapple with more challenging academic school work.

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

Trust and school leaders have a precise understanding of the school and its context. They are ambitious for pupils, including the high proportion of disadvantaged pupils who attend the school. Since the previous inspection, the school has taken significant steps to strengthen leadership and has sought, and taken heed of, external support. Bold, effective decisions are leading to marked improvements in the quality of education and care. Parents and carers, pupils and staff are warm in their praise for the positive difference the school makes.

The curriculum is typically well designed, ambitious and reflective of the school's context. It makes plain what pupils should learn. Learning is underpinned by a focus on literacy. In line with the school's realistic timelines, the work to develop the curriculum within aspects of a few subjects is ongoing.

The school's approach to teaching is set out in the 'Walker Toolkit'. Teachers follow the 'A. B. C. D.' approach (Activate. Build. Consolidate. Demonstrate.). Teachers build on prior learning and present new information clearly. They spot pupils' misconceptions and take effective steps to address them. Pupils develop a secure grasp of important knowledge. This is evident in the improved quality of their work. These strengths are apparent across many subjects, but not consistently so. As systems develop, some teachers are getting to grips with how best to enable pupils to practise what they study and check that pupils have understood key information. This means in some subjects, pupils' knowledge is less developed and they do not yet achieve as well as they should.

The school accurately identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those in the special educational needs (SEN) unit. Staff make effective use of strategies identified in pupils' learning passports. Pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their classmates.

The reading curriculum is well designed. Pupils read each day. Staff are quick to spot pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge. These pupils receive support to become more fluent, confident readers.

Leaders' effective work and a motivational rewards system are leading to improved attendance. While some pupils are absent too often, leaders are doing all they reasonably can to secure pupils' high attendance.

The school teaches pupils to foster an understanding of themselves and of others. Pupils are considerate of different lifestyles and beliefs. They speak confidently about the importance of mutual respect. Their understanding is reflected in the positive manner in which many pupils conduct themselves in lessons and around the school.

Pupils learn the knowledge they need to make wise choices about their safety and well-being. They understand what makes for a healthy relationship and the signs that indicate an unhealthy one. Pupils also receive the guidance they need to make decisions about their future studies and careers. Increasing numbers of pupils continue in education when they leave the school.

Trust and local governance are an important driver of the improvements evident in the school. Leaders seek and act on the views of parents and staff. Leaders are considerate of staff workload and well-being. Staff are proud to work at Walker Riverside Academy.

## **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's work to amend the curriculum is ongoing in a few subjects. Where this is the case, the improvement in pupils' achievement is not as evident as in more developed curriculum areas. The school should continue its work to develop the curriculum in these areas.
- As systems develop, the implementation of the curriculum in some subjects is inconsistent. This means that some pupils do not develop such a firm grasp of important knowledge. The school should continue to support teachers to deliver the curriculum equally well in all subjects so that pupils' achievement continues to improve.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	145528
<b>Local authority</b>	Newcastle upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	10346702
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,118
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Les Watson
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Mike Collier
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gareth Smith
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.wra.tynecoast.academy">www.wra.tynecoast.academy</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	14 and 15 June 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

## Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average secondary school.
- The current headteacher has been in post since April 2022.
- The chief executive officer of the Tyne Coast Academy Trust has been in post since September 2023.
- The school runs a communication and interaction SEN unit for up to 12 pupils, including pupils with speech, language and communication needs.
- The school has a higher-than-average proportion of pupils with education, health and care plans.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- There are currently no students in the sixth form. The school is not accepting students

at present pending the development of a revised sixth-form offer of qualifications in partnership with other schools in the trust.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.
- Inspectors held several meetings with the headteacher and other senior staff during the course of this inspection.
- Inspectors also met with several groups of teaching and support staff.
- An inspector met with members of the local governing body and members of the trust board, including the chair of the trust.
- Deep dives were carried out in these subjects: English, history, mathematics, music and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons alongside school leaders, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with several groups of pupils about their learning and their views on behaviour and the wider experiences they receive at school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour across the duration of the inspection.
- To check the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of pre-appointment checks; looked at safeguarding documentation; and spoke with staff, pupils, governors and trustees, a representation from the local authority and an alternative provision. Inspectors considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- An inspector also spoke with a representative of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne local authority and with the chief executive officer of a multi-academy trust that is working with the school.
- Inspectors reviewed the parental responses received through Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses, and other communications from parents.
- Inspectors also considered the responses received through Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires.

## Inspection team

John Lucas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jonathan Ferstenberg

Ofsted Inspector

Katherine Snowdon

Ofsted Inspector

Helen Lane

Ofsted Inspector

Stuart Voyce

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2024