Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Walkergate Community School

Sutton Street, Walkergate, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE6 4SD

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 April 2025

Outcome

Walkergate Community School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Dan Nelson. This school is part of NEAT 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 (CEO), Debi Bailey, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anne McNall.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a large school with an even larger heart. Warm and welcoming smiles greet visitors to the school. Strong relationships form the bedrock of the school's success. Staff know every pupil exceptionally well. The highly effective welfare team helps to establish positive home-school relationships right from the start.

The school is ambitious for its pupils and wants them to achieve well. Pupils work hard to realise such ambitions. They appreciate the extra support that they get when they need it. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils enjoy their learning.

Recently, the school has changed its approach to behaviour management. It places a focus on building strong, nurturing relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils have opportunities to have their say. They value the fairness of the new approach and adhere to the school's expectations. Skilled staff support pupils in need of extra support sensitively and effectively.

Playtimes are lively, with games and activities to suit all interests. Pupils enjoy the wide range of after-school clubs available to them, such as computing, Lego and drama. These foster pupils' interests and talents. The raft of leadership opportunities open to pupils helps them to grow in confidence and independence.

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

The school has developed a curriculum that is designed and sequenced well. The essential knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils must learn builds over time. Leaders use the latest research to inform their thinking. They continue to refine their practice to improve the delivery of the curriculum. Pupils' outcomes are improving because of this. In some subjects, changes to the curriculum are more recently implemented. In these subjects, the design of learning tasks does not enable pupils to build knowledge in the depth school intends. For example, in mathematics, pupils build knowledge and skills across a range of concepts. However, opportunities to use and apply this knowledge in more complex and demanding tasks are not as regular.

Reading is a high priority. The school ensures pupils read from a rich, high-quality range of texts. The school supports older pupils to make appropriate choices about what they read to develop their confidence and skills. Pupils learn to read quickly and successfully. Pupils quickly secure their phonics knowledge in line with the school's expectations. They practise their reading with books that are well matched to their phonics knowledge. Where needed, the school provides effective support to pupils who need it so they can keep up with the pace of the phonics programme.

Children in the early years settle into routines quickly. Staff provide effective support and intervene well to help children to sustain their interest in learning and play. Across the early years curriculum, the school has carefully mapped out links to later learning. This prepares children well for their next steps. The school's approach to early writing is less successful. Strategies used to help children write accurately and fluently are not applied consistently well. As a result, children do not acquire their early writing skills as quickly as they could.

The school has effective systems in place to identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school seeks the advice and support of specialists when needed. Staff adapt the curriculum well so that pupils with SEND can learn alongside their peers. The 'Oasis' classroom offers more specialist and bespoke support to further enhance the SEND offer in school.

The school has developed a comprehensive approach to pupils' personal development. This is a strength of the school. The cornerstone of the school's approach is the 'relational circles' programme. This allows pupils from all year groups to work together in smaller groups on key aspects of citizenship. This work enthuses pupils and helps them to learn about tolerance, diversity and equality. It deepens the relationships between staff and pupils across all year groups.

The school continues to prioritise attendance. In the past, attendance was too low. It is much improved now. The school's intensive efforts to promote good attendance have paid dividends. The proportion of pupils persistently absent from school has halved from the previous year.

Trustees and governors know the school exceptionally well. They fulfil their roles with diligence and dedication. They are highly ambitious for the school and ensure that there is a relentless focus on continuous improvement. There is a strong commitment to staff engagement, training and well-being. Staff value the extensive training offer that they receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school has not ensured that pupils get sufficient opportunities to use and apply their knowledge. This means that pupils do not achieve in some curriculum areas in the depth that the school intends. The school needs to ensure that task design allows pupils to use and apply their knowledge and deepen their learning.
- In the early years, approaches to the teaching of early writing are variable. This means that some children do not develop their early writing skills as quickly as they should. The school needs to ensure that staff have the knowledge and expertise they need to use the approaches to early writing with greater consistency, so that more children can develop their early writing skills effectively.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in March 2014.

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	144273
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10346685
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	656
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anne McNall
CEO of the trust	Debi Bailey
Headteacher	Dan Nelson
Website	walkergate.neat.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 and 29 January 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides a breakfast club for its pupils.
- The early years provision is located on a separate site to the main body of the school.
- The school offers provision for two-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school has 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.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, and members of school staff. Inspectors also met with representatives of the board of trustees and members of the governing body, including the chair.

- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 spoke with some parents during the inspection. They also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including any free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Diane Buckle, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Debra Murphy	Ofsted Inspector

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