

Inspection of a good school: Walkergate Community School

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

Inspection dates:

28–29 January 2020

Outcome

Walkergate Community School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The headteacher and staff have high expectations for every pupil. Character development is at the top of their list. Staff want pupils to be responsible and caring citizens. The older pupils say that staff are always 'looking after [them] and looking out for [them]'.

One parent commented that, 'Walkergate is a fantastic school. The staff go the extra mile to support the pupils.' It sums up the views of many pupils and parents. Pupils describe a happy, caring and safe environment. They say that older pupils look after the younger pupils. Pupils really enjoy their education.

Pupils say that behaviour in the school is good. They understand and follow the school's behaviour rules. Pupils say that bullying does not usually happen. Most parents agree with this. Pupils play happily together in the playground. They follow the instructions of their playleaders. Pupils work hard in lessons. No one is allowed to disturb lessons with poor behaviour.

Children in the early years love working in the outdoor woodland area. Pupils enjoy working alongside footballers from a local premier league team. They enjoy an exciting range of sports and games. Visits and visitors are an important part of school life. 'The school provides a safe and secure learning environment which can unlock the potential of my children,' said one happy parent.

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

Pupils study a wide range of subjects. School leaders have begun a thorough review of the planning for each subject. Leaders are working on this with the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust. The revised plans for some subjects are now complete. Teachers know exactly what to teach and in what order. These include mathematics and geography. Mathematics has improved over time. Pupils solve problems together. They try out the methods that other pupils suggest. In geography, pupils have learned about the Great Fire of Newcastle. They could explain the physical features and human features of this event. The school's review of other subjects, such as art and physical education (PE), is still ongoing.

In many subjects, other than mathematics and English, it is not always clear what teachers want the most able pupils to achieve. Parents agree that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do well in school. Staff make sure that the curriculum works for these pupils.

Leaders ensure that reading is a major priority in the school. Staff share their favourite books with pupils. Staff read on a regular basis to the pupils, with great enjoyment. Year 5 pupils can become 'reading champions'. They have a good understanding of the best way to help Year 2 pupils when they are stuck on a word. Staff recognise that many pupils do not have a wide vocabulary. Staff plan a range of activities to improve this. There is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics. This means that children in the early years get off to a good start with their reading. They are well-prepared for Year 1. One parent commented, 'My child is now in Year 1 and I am extremely proud of how well he can read.' Younger pupils read books that match the sounds they know. Staff are quick to support pupils who need to catch up with their reading. Staff are well trained. This means that almost all pupils achieve well in reading. The two-year-olds in Nursery learn lots of rhymes and songs. This gives them a good start with their early reading.

Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. They apply these expectations in a fair and consistent way. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very positive in lessons. The dining hall is busy and vibrant. Lunchtime supervisors say that behaviour is good. Pupils take notice of instructions given by adults.

Leaders set high standards for attendance across the school. Most pupils love coming to school. A parent told inspectors, 'My daughter cannot bear to miss a day – even through illness!' Even so, a small number of pupils are absent from school on a regular basis. They miss out on important learning. Leaders work with pupils and their families to tackle this issue.

Pupils have many opportunities to take on roles and responsibilities. These include school councillors, house captain, vice-captain and classroom monitors. The school follows an external programme to develop positive character traits in pupils. Educational trips, visitors into school and residential visits bring learning to life. A full-time sports leader organises a wide range of activities. Pupils say that everyone is welcome in their school. They understand about different backgrounds, families, cultures and faiths. The school's values are responsibility, respect and resilience. Even the younger pupils have a good understanding of these.

The headteacher and senior leaders work very well together. They have the same vision of excellence. Staff from the other schools in the trust meet and work well together. They learn from each other and share their expertise. Staff in the school know that leaders care about their well-being. They feel incredibly valued. Staff receive lots of opportunities to learn. They work well with parents to involve them in their children's learning. One parent commented, 'The school is excellent at letting me know what is expected and how my child is doing.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff understand how to keep pupils safe. They know they can raise any concerns they may have. Leaders make thorough checks on staff before they start working at the school. Governors are very active in ensuring that pupils are safe. They have areas of expertise that they use to support the school. Leaders take great care to make sure that pupils are safe. For example, leaders make regular and frequent checks on safety arrangements across the school's two separate sites.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They understand how to work safely online. They learn about road safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is not yet sufficiently coherently planned and sequenced in some foundation subjects, such as art and PE. Content is not always taught in a logical way – systematically and explicitly. Consequently, not all pupils acquire the intended knowledge and skills they need. However, it is clear from the actions that leaders have already taken to plan the curriculum in some subjects, such as mathematics and geography, that they are in the process of bringing this about. Leaders need to continue this work. Ofsted's transition arrangements were used on this inspection to confirm that pupils benefit from a good quality of education.
- Current plans for subjects other than English and mathematics do not always include end points for the most able pupils. Consequently, teachers are not always sure exactly what they are aiming for. Leaders must ensure that all curriculum plans make the end points clear, particularly for pupils who are working beyond the expected standard.
- A small number of pupils are persistently absent from school. Although numbers are slowly reducing, the percentage of persistent absence remains in the highest 20% nationally. These pupils miss out on important aspects of the curriculum, as well as the chance to revisit their learning. Leaders set high standards for attendance across the school. They follow up persistent absence meticulously and relentlessly with the small number of families concerned. Leaders should continue to work with these families to reduce persistent absence further.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Walkergate Community School, to be good 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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	144273
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10121772
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Not applicable
Number of pupils on the school roll	701
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	Not applicable
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Karen Elizabeth Heslop
Headteacher	Alison Young
Website	www.walkergate.newcastle.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy

Information about this school

- Walkergate Community School converted to become an academy on 1 April 2017. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Walkergate Community School is part of the Newcastle East Mixed Multi-Academy Trust (NEAT). The other schools in NEAT are: West Walker Primary School, Central Walker Church of England Primary School, Benfield School and Tyneview Primary School. Walkergate Community School is a teaching and research school.
- The school has a new headteacher since the last inspection. There have also been several changes to the structure of the senior leadership team.
- The children in the early years are housed on a separate site. Within this, the school has provision for two-year-olds.
- A private provider runs a breakfast club and after-school club on both sites.

Information about this inspection

- We met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the three assistant headteachers. We also met with five governors and the CEO of the trust.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. We spoke with senior leaders about the structure and planning of the curriculum. We met with the curriculum leader for each subject and visited a selection of lessons with them. We also scrutinised a range of pupils' books in each subject and met with a selection of these pupils to discuss their learning. We listened to pupils reading and talked with them about the books they enjoy. We had discussions with the teachers of the classes that we visited.
- We checked the school's policies and records around safeguarding. We spoke with the designated safeguarding leader, governors, pupils, staff and parents to check on the school's culture of safeguarding.
- We observed and spoke with pupils during their social times. We considered the 40 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, together with free-text comments. There were no responses to the pupil survey or the staff survey.
- We spoke with the inclusion leader to discuss the provision for pupils with SEND. We looked at how well leaders protect pupils from bullying and manage staff workload and well-being.
- We observed the early years children in their woodland area. We evaluated the school's provision for two-year-olds.

Inspection team

Heather Mensah, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Alison Aitchison

Her Majesty's Inspector

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