

Walney School

Sandy Gap Lane, Walney, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA14 3JT

Inspection dates

7–8 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' progress and attainment have improved since the last inspection. Nevertheless, a legacy of poor teaching means that too many pupils do not achieve well across a range of subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils' achievement is improving. However, there is still a difference between disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment and that of other pupils nationally.
- In the past, the curriculum has not met pupils' needs. Leaders have made changes to the curriculum, but it is too early for these to have had a sustained impact on pupils' learning and progress.
- Middle leaders' actions are only just beginning to contribute to driving improvements in the school.
- Teaching is improving and there is evidence of very strong practice. Some teachers use questioning effectively to help pupils to develop deeper understanding, but this is not consistent across the school.
- Some teachers do not focus on developing pupils' literacy skills well enough. This includes encouraging pupils' love of reading.
- Teachers' assessment skills are not fully developed. Some learning is not planned effectively to meet pupils' needs.
- Governors do not hold leaders to account to ensure that pupil premium funding is used effectively to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Under the leadership of the headteacher, the school has come through a period of turbulence to a place of stability where pupils can learn.
- The drive and resilience of senior leaders has brought about improvements in the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour and, consequently, pupils' learning.
- Attendance has improved steadily over the last three years and is now broadly in line with the national average for all pupils.
- Pupils are attentive learners. They participate well in their learning. They are well behaved around school and are respectful to adults and each other. Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by making sure that all teachers:
 - use assessment effectively to plan learning that is sufficiently challenging and meets the needs of all groups of pupils
 - use questioning that enables pupils to think deeper and develop their understanding
 - develop pupils' literacy skills across all subjects, including pupils' use of subject-specific vocabulary.
- Further improve outcomes for pupils by:
 - ensuring that pupils make at least good progress from their starting points across all subjects
 - using pupil premium funding effectively to diminish the differences in the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally
 - ensuring that the new curriculum is embedded and meets the needs of pupils.
- Build on the effectiveness of middle leaders so that they can support senior leaders in effectively driving school improvement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has been pivotal in bringing about considerable improvement at Walney School. This has been a long journey and there have been many staffing changes over the last few years. However, the school is now a place of stability. There is a full complement of staff, including at senior and middle leadership levels, and a clear plan for further improvement.
- Senior leaders understand the headteacher's vision and know what needs to be done to put it into action. Leaders have already taken effective action to improve standards across several areas. For example, teaching is improving, pupils' behaviour is good, and the curriculum is now more effectively meeting pupils' needs.
- Middle leaders have been empowered through high-quality training and increased responsibility. They are enthused and engaged. They are beginning to understand their areas of responsibility and to hold teachers in their departments to account.
- At all levels, leaders are focused on raising achievement through the improvement of teaching and learning. High-quality, regular training for teachers has already delivered some improvements. Teachers are keen to use new skills in the classroom. Despite the improvements in the quality of teaching, it is not consistently good as not all teachers incorporate the training into their practice effectively.
- Leaders have high expectations for pupils. Middle leaders and teachers are challenged to help pupils meet their potential. This has helped teachers to understand that their previous expectations of pupils were too low.
- Leaders have made improvements to the curriculum. In the past, the curriculum did not meet the needs of pupils and this led to significant underachievement. Changes to the curriculum ensure that pupils have an appropriate broad and balanced curriculum that leads to meaningful qualifications. Unfortunately, the new curriculum has not been in place long enough to demonstrate substantial impact, particularly on GCSE outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders now provide high-quality independent careers advice for pupils. This is a blend of focused days, pupil interviews and mentoring. The school uses independent advisers and has made links with local employers and further education providers to ensure that pupils get a wide range of experiences. For the last two years, all Year 11 pupils have continued into further education, employment or training.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is important to leaders. Time is set aside on the curriculum to develop pupils' awareness of the world in which they live. A number of trips take place during the year to broaden pupils' knowledge of different cultures. Pupils are encouraged to participate in charity events within the community. For example, pupils deliver hampers to the elderly and hold a party for them each January. As a result, pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- The trust has acted on the external review of governance that was recommended at the time of the last inspection. There is now a rapid improvement committee that comprises the chief executive officer of the trust, three members of the governing body and a representative from Cumbria local authority. This board works with school leaders to support school improvement and reports on progress to the local governing body and the trust board.
- Governors do not always hold leaders to account. This is because they are over reliant on individual governors and the trust board to make leaders accountable. For example, governors are not aware of how effectively pupil premium funding is being spent because they expect the pupil premium governor to do this independently. In addition, the pupil premium statement does not give enough detail about pupils' barriers to learning. As a result, governors are not aware of the effectiveness of this spending.
- Governors do not realise that it is their statutory responsibility to ensure that pupil premium funding is targeted to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have established a culture of safeguarding across the school. There are appropriate systems in place to ensure that only adults who are safe to work with pupils are employed by the school. The safeguarding policy has been updated this year and training is delivered regularly to teachers. Staff know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil and are aware of the key issues in the area.
- Pupils told inspectors that they know how to keep themselves safe. They know how to keep themselves safe online and said that bullying was not an issue in school but, if it happens, it is dealt with promptly by teachers.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is improving. There is evidence of strong practice across the school and leaders are harnessing this expertise to help all teachers improve. Teachers value the training that is given to them. They are excited about trying new ideas and enjoy the collaborative nature of the support that helps them to improve their teaching.
- Leaders know that in the past, teachers have not had high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. They have taken strong action to remedy this weakness and have increased pupils' aspirations and aims. Teachers have raised the demands that they make of the pupils. However, there are times when some teachers do not use assessment information effectively to plan learning, and this hinders pupils' progress.
- Teachers' questioning skills have been a key focus in the improvement of teaching and learning. Questioning is often used effectively, and teachers encourage pupils to think deeply and justify their ideas. This helps them to improve their knowledge and understanding. For example, during the inspection, pupils were asked to explain how

the coast can be protected from erosion. The teacher went on to ask more probing questions which encouraged pupils to consider the benefits and drawbacks of each method and evaluate the impact of these. However, not all teachers have taken on board the need to use questioning more effectively, and they fail to take pupils' learning on to the next stage. This has a negative impact on the overall improvement in teaching.

- Despite improvements, the quality of teaching is not consistently good. There are times when some teachers do not challenge pupils, particularly the most able. Consequently, pupils do not always develop a deeper understanding of their learning. Leaders are aware of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and have plans in place to continue to improve further.
- Literacy is improving and pupils in Year 7 told inspectors how much they enjoyed reading for pleasure. However, some teachers do not routinely develop pupils' literacy skills, including subject-specific vocabulary.
- Leaders have introduced a more precise approach to recording the needs and support of all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils and teachers can easily share strategies that have helped pupils to learn. Teachers are therefore planning more effectively to meet the needs of these pupils.
- Since the introduction of this approach, pupils with SEND have made improved progress. This is particularly the case for pupils who are disadvantaged and with SEND. Leaders have decided to extend this approach to include all disadvantaged pupils so that disadvantaged pupils' barriers to learning can be identified and shared with staff.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are strong. They listen attentively and fully engage in their learning. Poor behaviour is extremely rare during learning, and pupils demonstrate resilience by continuing to work at a task even when they find it difficult. For example, when working on problem-solving in mathematics pupils kept trying different ways of determining an answer until they felt that they had understood it.
- The work seen in books demonstrates pupils' hard work. The work is complete and neat. Presentation is tidy. There is evidence of pupils grappling with difficult questions, which helps them to make better progress as a result.
- Leaders support pupils' personal development through a wide range of enrichment activities. These include charity events and the pupil mentor scheme, where Year 11 pupils help younger pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. There are several cultural visits, such as trips to the theatre and a World War 1 battlefields trip.
- Leaders provide high-quality independent careers advice for pupils. Currently, this is focused on pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11. However, leaders plan to extend this to Years 7 and 8 in the future. As a result of this advice, all pupils in Year 11 moved on to education, employment or training after their GCSE examinations.

- The majority of parents and pupils feel that bullying is rare. Parents and pupils are confident that staff will deal effectively with any incidents of bullying that may occur. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they feel safe in school and have been taught how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils understand the importance of tolerance and respect. They told inspectors that all pupils would be welcomed into Walney School and spoke with maturity about lesbian, gay and transgender issues.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are friendly and polite to each other and to staff. There are strong relationships between staff and pupils that support effective learning. Pupils are welcoming and helpful to visitors. They move around the school calmly and efficiently to ensure that they arrive promptly for lessons.
- Pupils demonstrate respect for their environment. There is no graffiti in the school and pupils do not drop litter. The school is a pleasant and safe place to learn.
- The appointment of a school education welfare officer has brought about significant improvement in attendance. The school's overall attendance rate has been improving for the last three years and is now above the national average. Overall, the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school is lower than the national average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are regularly absent is slightly higher than the national average for all pupils, but their attendance is steadily improving.
- Leaders' actions to improve behaviour have been successful. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is good. The proportion of pupils that are temporarily excluded from school has fallen steadily over the last three years and is now broadly in line with the national average. There is a similar picture for disadvantaged pupils, where the proportion temporarily excluded from school is only slightly higher than the national average and is continuing to fall.
- Leaders have ensured that appropriate systems are in place to check on the behaviour of pupils who attend alternative provision and to ensure that they are safe.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Leaders are starting to overcome the legacy of weak teaching and a curriculum that did not meet pupils' needs. They are achieving some success, but the impact on national data in 2018 was limited. For example, in the 2018 GCSE examinations, pupils' progress in mathematics and science improved.
- Although pupils overall do not make consistently good progress, it is better than in the past. Work in pupils' books in Years 7, 8 and 9 shows that current pupils are making stronger progress. These pupils have not had to overcome the legacy of weak teaching, and the poor curriculum has not had as big an impact.
- Over time, work seen in pupils' books demonstrates that in Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils are developing their knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects.

Standards of literacy are improving. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' progress is not as strong and work is focused on recall rather than application of knowledge. The work seen in pupils' books supports the school's own information, which demonstrates that rates of progress are improving in the lower year groups.

- Although pupils are making better progress in key stage three, there continues to be variation across the school in different subject areas for groups of pupils. For example, in geography and French, disadvantaged pupils are still making less progress than other pupils.
- In some subjects, the most able pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable. This is because some teachers do not set challenging work or use questioning effectively to encourage pupils to think deeply and develop their understanding.
- High-quality independent careers advice supports pupils in making informed choices about the next stage of their education. As a result, for the last two years all Year 11 pupils have continued into further education, employment or training.

School details

Unique reference number	141041
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10046401

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	582
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Anthony Sinton
Headteacher	John Richardson
Telephone number	01229 471 528
Website	www.walneyschool.co.uk
Email address	office@walney.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29–30 November 2016

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. The proportion of girls is lower than the proportion of boys.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The school is predominantly white British and the proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language is low.
- The school is a member of the Queen Katherine School multi-academy trust. The sponsor offers support to the school, including support for financial management and human resources.
- The school retains its own local governing body. Several members on the trust board sit on the local governing body.

- The school currently has three pupils in alternative provision at Newbridge House and Moorfield Learning Centre.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a range of subjects, including joint observations with school leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work from Years 7, 9 and 11 across a range of subjects alongside school leaders.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Inspectors also met formally with pupils and spoke with pupils informally during social times. Inspectors spoke with a group of curriculum leaders, a group of pastoral leaders and a group of teachers and teaching assistants.
- An inspector spoke with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. An inspector also spoke with two members of the trust board.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation, including school policies, safeguarding procedures, leaders' self-evaluation and leaders' school improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered the 26 responses to the online staff questionnaire, 41 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 23 written responses from parents. There was only one response from the online pupils' questionnaire.

Inspection team

Erica Sharman, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Edmondson	Ofsted Inspector
Nell Banfield	Ofsted Inspector

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