

Thomas Walling Primary Academy

Lindfield Avenue, Blakelaw, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE5 3PL

Inspection dates

29–30 January 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Pupils' outcomes have been, and remain, too low. By the end of key stage 2, pupils make significantly less progress than their peers nationally in reading and mathematics.
- Over time, leaders' and governors' actions have not sufficiently improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Recently overhauled systems for assessment are not securely embedded.
- Since the previous inspection, instability in staffing has hampered leaders' effectiveness in bringing about the necessary improvements to teaching.
- Pupils do not read with the knowledge and skills expected for their age. Consequently, they are not well prepared for the next stage in their education and their progress across the wider curriculum is hindered.
- Subject leadership is underdeveloped. Some subject leaders, including those who are new to post, have had limited impact on improving standards in their areas of responsibility.
- Teachers do not use assessment information or additional adults effectively to plan next learning activities that meet pupils' needs.
- Despite the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2018 being above the national average, current pupils are making poor progress in learning to read. Teachers do not match books or learning closely to pupils' phonics knowledge and skills.
- Disadvantaged pupils in each year group achieve less well than their peers within school, and those nationally, in reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils' weak progress in reading is particularly concerning.
- Some children in the early years do not make sufficient progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Not all children are well prepared for Year 1.
- In some lessons in key stage 1, low-level disruption and off-task behaviour negatively affect pupils' learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive principal and the head of school have now identified the correct priorities. They have the capacity to bring about improvement.
- The safeguarding procedures are a strength of the school. Pupils are well cared for.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Pupils are friendly, courteous and polite. Pupils are happy and feel safe in school.
- Senior leaders have worked in partnership with parents and carers to improve pupils' attendance.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to improve pupils' outcomes by ensuring that all teachers:
 - use assessment information incisively to plan tasks and learning across the curriculum to accurately meet the needs of all pupils
 - ensure that pupils' reading books and learning tasks are well matched to their phonics knowledge and skills
 - create regular opportunities for pupils to engage in reading activities to support fluency, expression and deeper understanding by deploying teaching assistants effectively so that their impact on pupils' progress is maximised.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - securing consistently a good quality of teaching, learning and assessment in each key stage and subject
 - embedding the recently overhauled system of assessment so that leaders and teachers have an accurate overview of pupils' progress and attainment
 - rapidly improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils across subjects, particularly in reading
 - ensuring that subject leaders have a positive impact on the progress of pupils in all year groups
 - developing new senior leaders' knowledge and understanding of all key stages
 - putting appropriate training and support in place to enable teachers to teach reading more effectively and so promote pupils' progress
 - building on the positive relationships with parents so that they can take a more active role in their child's reading development.
- Embed the recent changes in the early years so that more children reach a good level of development and are better prepared for the demands of Year 1 by:
 - ensuring that teaching provides greater opportunities for children to practise and develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics
 - accurately matching children's reading books and learning tasks to their phonics knowledge and skills.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - reducing instances of low-level disruption by making sure that learning meets pupils' interests and needs
 - reducing the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent so that it is in line

- with the national average
- improving pupils' punctuality.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since September 2017, there have been significant changes in the leadership of the school at all levels. Prior to this, instability in teaching and leadership meant that leaders and those responsible for governance were not able to respond quickly enough to the areas for improvement from the last inspection.
- Leaders now have a firm grip on the current situation. The executive principal and head of school are steering the school with a new sense of purpose and direction. They have recently overhauled the school's assessment systems to ensure that these are providing a more accurate picture of pupils' progress and attainment. However, the new systems are not fully embedded.
- Pupils and staff know what is expected of them. Indeed, there is a tangible team spirit. Teaching and pupils' engagement in learning are now starting to improve but, over time, pupils have not made strong progress in their learning when compared to their peers nationally.
- Leaders have shown that they can tackle challenging situations and have begun to bring about change for the better. However, more is required to strengthen leadership and teaching across the school. Newly appointed members of the leadership team need support and challenge to broaden their knowledge and understanding of all key stages and thereby increase their effectiveness. Subject leaders do not have a positive impact on the progress of pupils in all year groups.
- Leaders are not complacent and they welcome support from other schools within the trust and from the local authority. The executive principal and head of school recognise the need for urgency in bringing about improvement and, to this end, have begun some partnership work in mathematics and reading across several schools in and beyond the local authority. Advisers from the local authority speak positively about leaders' involvement and engagement in these potentially powerful initiatives. However, it is too soon to see a sustained and secure impact on standards.
- Spending of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is planned for and targeted to improve pupils' outcomes. However, school leaders do not evaluate the impact of their actions swiftly enough or use their findings to adapt and rapidly modify any support provided. As a result, disadvantaged pupils continue to underachieve in key subjects, particularly in reading.
- Leaders use additional funding for physical education and sport in primary schools effectively to support pupils' learning and well-being. Leaders have positively engaged with external providers to ensure that pupils have a broad experience through a range of sports and competitive events. Pupils speak positively about sport, and younger pupils were especially keen about playing football at lunchtime. This work contributes to the development of pupils' healthy lifestyles.
- The school promotes pupils' understanding of British values well. Pupils speak with confidence about the school's core values of enthusiasm, respect and honesty. Leaders ensure that pupils are given regular opportunities to talk about current events, tolerance, liberty and the rule of law through the school's 'Information Station'. As a

result of these opportunities, pupils have a clear understanding of British values and can explain the principles in an age-appropriate way.

Governance of the school

- Governors have high aspirations for the school. However, since the last inspection, actions to address the main areas of school improvement have been too slow. Governors recognise that leadership and staffing instability has had a negative impact on the progress of all pupils. Consequently, governors prioritised the recruitment of key staff. These appointments have been successful, and the school now has staff in place to bring about the necessary improvements.
- Governors have recently developed a more strategic approach to monitoring the school's priorities. Governors' minutes show that governors are starting to offer an appropriate balance of challenge and support to leaders. There is evidence that, with increased support from the trust and improved reporting, governors are now more readily able to hold leaders to account.
- Governors are very supportive of the executive principal and head of school. They share their aspirational vision to rapidly improve pupils' outcomes.
- The trust fulfils its statutory duties in regard to safeguarding. The chief executive officer (CEO) carries out regular checks on the school's procedures. Governors have a thorough knowledge and understanding of their legal duties regarding safeguarding and ensure that the safeguarding culture in the school is strong.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Staff have a good understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures and policy. As a result of the good-quality programme of training provided, staff know the signs and symptoms of abuse. Governors and members of the trust have also received training for the safer recruitment of staff.
- Leaders, including the welfare manager, take appropriate and timely action where there are concerns about a pupil's welfare. They respond swiftly and effectively to any concerns raised and are tenacious in securing action and involvement from the appropriate external agencies. Leaders' records are meticulous.
- The school's safeguarding documentation meets all legal requirements. Staff recruitment files are well kept and organised.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching is inadequate. There is stronger practice in some year groups, particularly in upper key stage 2. However, overall, teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate because teaching over time has failed to ensure that pupils make adequate progress, particularly in reading. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not make the progress that they should.

- The teaching of reading is ineffective. Leaders revised the school's approach to the teaching of reading in January 2019. However, they do not ensure that pupils have frequent opportunities to read with adults in school. This has a negative impact on pupils' reading skills. Teachers and teaching assistants do not demonstrate a strong understanding of how children learn to read. Furthermore, pupils' reading books and learning tasks are not consistently well matched to their reading skills, understanding and ability. Consequently, pupils' progress in reading is weak.
- The teaching of phonics is variable. Teachers do not always ensure that books or learning tasks are effectively matched to pupils' phonics knowledge and skills. This has a negative impact on current pupils' progress in sounding out words. Teaching assistants sometimes provide effective support for pupils' learning, whether in small groups or as individuals. However, teachers do not routinely ensure that teaching assistants are clear about their role so that their impact on pupils' learning is maximised.
- Leaders have recently taken action to ensure that teachers' assessment of pupils' learning is more accurate than previously. Despite these changes, teachers do not use information about pupils' learning well to plan next steps. As a result, teachers do not match tasks effectively to meet pupils' needs.
- Recent initiatives that leaders have introduced to improve the quality of teaching in mathematics have contributed to some improved teaching in key stage 2. Consequently, in 2018, Year 6 pupils attained better results in mathematics. However, they still did not make the progress of which they were fully capable, and their attainment remained well below the national average.
- Leaders' work to improve the teaching of writing is contributing to pupils' increased progress. Writing books are well presented and show evidence of pupils' ability to edit, correct and improve their work. This practice is stronger in upper key stage 2. Published data shows that, in 2018, Year 6 pupils made above-average progress in writing. In key stage 1, pupils do not have a good understanding of the words that they use in their writing. Younger pupils copy words without knowing their meaning or how to apply them correctly.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Staff are supportive and work to develop pupils' understanding of how to take responsibility for their learning. This process is at an early stage and is not as effective as it needs to be to help pupils catch up in their learning. At times, especially in key stage 1, some pupils are over-reliant on adult support and disengage from learning when not directly supported by an adult.
- Most pupils in key stage 2 are responding well to higher expectations and are beginning to show more determination to improve their work. For example, they take pride in their written work and ensure that it is well presented.
- Pupils' weak progress in reading and mathematics means that they are not consistently well prepared for the next stage of their education, particularly those who are

disadvantaged. Pupils' understanding of how to be successful in their learning is not well developed.

- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They are confident in approaching staff to report any concerns that they might have. The pupils that inspectors spoke with were confident that there was no bullying in school. Moreover, they were equally clear that, if it did happen, the teachers would sort it out quickly.
- Pupils who find it hard to cope in school or who have difficulties outside of school receive appropriate support. The school's welfare manager and her team work effectively to ensure that pupils' pastoral needs are met. Through her work and that of leaders, pupils and their parents know that the school will act quickly in response to any problems or concerns that arise.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Engagement in learning is stronger in upper key stage 2. Incidents of off-task behaviour or low-level disruption occur more frequently in key stage 1, especially where learning is not appropriately matched to pupils' needs. This has a negative effect on pupils' progress and attainment.
- Leaders are determined to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality. They use a range of strategies such as first-day contact, home visits, and, where appropriate, issuing penalty fines. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved. However, too many pupils arrive late to school. Consequently, this has a negative impact on their learning, especially their reading, as younger pupils invariably miss the morning phonics lesson.
- Pupils conduct themselves well and most adopt a mature, thoughtful outlook. Rapport between adults and pupils in the school is strong and relationships are positive. As a result, most pupils demonstrate a good level of social awareness and cooperate well with others. The vast majority of pupils model the school's core values of honesty, respect and enthusiasm.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- At key stage 2, for the last two years, pupils' progress in mathematics and reading has been in the bottom 20% of all schools nationally. In 2017, pupils' progress in reading and mathematics was significantly lower than the national averages. Pupils' progress in mathematics was particularly poor. Since the last inspection, pupils' progress in reading has been below average. Pupils make stronger progress in writing. In 2018, Year 6 pupils' progress in writing was above the national average.
- In 2018, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics were well below the national averages. Pupils' attainment in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 has been in the bottom 20% of all schools nationally for the last two years.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is inadequate, having been exceptionally weak over time. There are wide differences in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics. These differences are not diminishing.

There is some incremental improvement in mathematics but, in reading, this is not the case.

- For pupils currently in the school, a legacy of weak teaching continues to hold them back. There are signs of improvement. In 2018, Year 6 pupils attained higher standards in reading and mathematics than in previous years, although these standards are still well below average. In upper key stage 2, pupils are still spending a lot of time catching up and, for many of them, standards remain low.
- Current pupils' reading skills are consistently below those expected for their age. Weak teaching of reading means that pupils do not have the knowledge and skills required to read well. Consequently, pupils are not being well prepared for the next stage of their education and their access to the wider curriculum is greatly hindered.
- Recent improvements in the teaching of phonics led to a greater proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard at the end of Year 1. In 2018, the proportion of pupils achieving this standard was above the national average. However, current pupils, especially the weakest readers, are not making the strong progress needed in phonics to enable them to become confident and fluent readers by the end of key stage 1. In part, this is because teachers do not match books or learning activities closely to pupils' phonics knowledge and skills.
- A large proportion of children leave the early years not well enough prepared for the challenges of the national curriculum in Year 1. Inconsistent teaching in key stage 1 often leaves children with insufficient opportunities to practise and develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year has been well below the national average. Most children enter early years with skills below those typical for their age. However, adults do not build on and develop children's skills rapidly enough to enable them to catch them up with their peers nationally.
- Some children do not consistently develop secure reading skills in readiness for Year 1. During the inspection, some children were able to read accurately because they had been taught effectively to carefully segment and sound out their words. Others, however, were able to sound out individual letters but were unable to blend them together accurately. Reading books are not well matched to children's phonics skills and knowledge.
- Safeguarding is effective and the welfare requirements for the early years are in place. Children explore the learning environment with energy and confidence, showing that they feel safe. Relationships between the staff and children are very positive.
- The newly appointed early years leader has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and is taking action to improve the quality of teaching across the Nursery and Reception classes. However, despite the increase in adult-directed learning, not all teaching is good. This is because adults do not consistently ensure that tasks are matched appropriately to children's needs and interests.
- Despite being an area for improvement at the last inspection, the outdoor area lacks

appropriate stimuli. This area does not provide sufficient opportunities to support the development of children's reading, writing and mathematics.

School details

Unique reference number	140788
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10059069

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

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	447
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Eileen Bolton
Executive Principal	Keeley Wood
Head of School	Rebecca Hann
Telephone number	0191 286 0333
Website	www.thomaswallingacademy.com
Email address	admin@thomaswallingacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	21–22 September 2016

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- There have been a significant number of changes in staffing, including leadership, since the previous inspection.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average.
- A greater proportion of pupils join or leave the school at other than the expected times, compared with schools nationally.
- The school provides a breakfast club and offers a range of after-school activities.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector also met with the local authority improvement adviser and the CEO of the Laidlaw Schools Trust.
- Inspectors met with a range of subject and phase leaders. Inspectors also met with senior leaders, including the deputy headteacher, and the teaching and learning leader from the trust.
- Inspectors visited classrooms to observe teaching and learning and to look at pupils' work. Inspectors also looked in depth at current pupils' English books, mathematics books and other work across a range of subjects.
- The inspectors met with a group of pupils from key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- Inspectors also listened to pupils read, including a group of pupils who had not achieved the standard in the phonics screening check.
- Inspectors also listened to pupils read informally during their visits to lessons.
- Inspectors considered the 11 free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 29 questionnaire responses from staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke with several parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors evaluated recent information in relation to pupils' progress throughout the school.
- Inspectors evaluated the school's self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan, a sample of monitoring records and additional documentation about leaders' work and plans.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader and the welfare manager and reviewed documentation and records about how the school keeps pupils safe.

Inspection team

Daniel Murray, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Fiona Manuel	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kathryn McDonald	Ofsted Inspector

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