

Inspection of a good school: Walton Oak Primary School

Ambleside Avenue, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey KT12 3LN

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 July 2023

Outcome

Walton Oak Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and enjoy attending Walton Oak Primary School. The school's 'WOW' values of being ambitious, collaborative, courageous, curious, inclusive, kind, resilient and respectful are lived and breathed by the whole school community. Caring and respectful relationships between adults and pupils run through the school. Pupils learn to celebrate diversity and to treat everyone with kindness. As one pupil said, 'It would be boring if everyone was the same.'

Staff have high expectations for pupils. The new behaviour policy is used consistently, and routines are well established. Pupils understand what is expected of them. Pupils know the school rules and like the rewards they get for making positive choices and 'staying on green'. Low-level disruption is uncommon in class. Teachers address any interruptions quickly when they do occur. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that bullying is rare. Leaders quickly resolve any difficulties or problems that may arise.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is enriched through trips, visits and workshops. Pupils enjoy the wider opportunities that they have, such as working with authors and graphic designers. Pupils relish the leadership opportunities available and take an active role in improving the school through the pupil parliament. As one parent summarised, 'There are many opportunities for children to challenge themselves and have enriching experiences.'

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

Leaders prioritise reading and live by the mantra that 'pupils learn to read, so that they can read to learn.' All staff are trained in how to teach reading effectively, and the phonics programme is taught expertly by highly skilled staff. Staff carry out daily checks to identify any children who are struggling to keep up. These pupils receive the support they need to catch up quickly. Pupils enjoy reading. Right from the early years, teachers read books that capture children's interests and imagination. Pupils read books that closely match the sounds that they are learning. They get the help they need to become fluent readers.

Leaders are united in their vision for the school and their ambitions for all pupils to achieve well. Leaders are revising the curriculum for all subjects. They have rightly prioritised reading and mathematics, and these curriculums are well considered. For example, the mathematics curriculum identifies the most important knowledge that pupils should learn. Pupils have regular, planned opportunities to revisit their learning and practise new skills. In the early years, children have plenty of opportunities to explore numbers, both in structured lessons and during free-flow learning. Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their specific needs identified and considered well. Staff are trained in how best to adapt the curriculum so that all pupils can access the learning. Pupils with SEND are well supported to access the full curriculum.

Leaders know that the curriculum for some foundation subjects needs to be strengthened further. In a minority of subjects, leaders have not been precise enough about what they want pupils to know and remember. This means teachers are not always clear about what to teach and when. Leaders have an accurate understanding of what needs to be done to secure the necessary improvements and have set to work on improving the curriculum in these subjects. Through the trust, leaders provide coaching support to develop staff's expertise in curriculum development. Subject leaders have been inspired by this work.

In some subjects, teachers use assessment well to spot misunderstandings quickly. They use this information to address any gaps in pupils' learning and iron out any misconceptions. However, in a handful of subjects where the curriculum is less developed, assessment is not as precise. Consequently, some pupils have gaps in their understanding of some key knowledge and concepts.

There are many opportunities for pupils to engage in activities that promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through the extensive programme of extra-curricular opportunities, pupils develop their skills and interests. These include cheerleading, art, coding and cooking. Year 6 pupils were particularly excited about their production of 'Star Warts', and performed their songs with confidence.

The chief executive officer (CEO), members of the trust board and local governing body are deeply committed to the school. They share the headteacher's vision for continuous school improvement. One parent commented that the school 'is going from strength to strength' under the new leadership. Staff acknowledge that there is a lot to do but are positive about how leaders consider their workload and well-being. Staff feel supported and valued. They say that the leaders 'make you feel important' and are 'always willing to talk and help without judgement'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that all staff are thoroughly trained to recognise the signs that might indicate a pupil is at risk of abuse. There are appropriate systems in place for reporting concerns and securing help. Leaders manage safeguarding records well.

Leaders work effectively with external agencies to ensure that necessary support is swiftly put in place. Leaders regularly signpost families to appropriate support. Pupils are taught about offline and online risks and how to keep themselves safe.

Safer recruitment checks are robust, and effective procedures are in place to manage any allegations concerning staff.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few foundation subjects, leaders have not been precise enough about the most important things they want pupils to know and remember. This means that, in these subjects, teachers are unclear exactly what they need to teach and assess. Leaders should ensure that, in all subjects, the curriculum is equally well thought out so that pupils learn the important knowledge that they need to know and remember.
- In some subjects, teachers do not always check pupils' understanding precisely enough. As a result, gaps in pupils' learning and any misconceptions are not addressed well enough. Leaders should ensure that teachers have the information needed to spot and quickly remedy any misunderstanding.

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 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Walton Oak Primary School, to be good in November 2017.

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](#)' 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	146682
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10268501
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	447
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ray Vango
Headteacher	Sian McCarthy
Website	www.waltonoakprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Walton Oak Primary School converted to become an academy school in April 2019. When its predecessor school, Walton Oak Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has joined the Lumen Learning Trust.
- The school has had four different headteachers since the last inspection. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2022.
- The chair of governors has been in post since April 2020.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and design and technology. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also observed some pupils reading to a member of staff.
- The inspector also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in science and history.
- A range of documents were reviewed, including leaders' evaluation of the school, priorities for improvement, external reviews, governor visits, minutes of governor body meetings, minutes of trust board of directors' meetings and documentation relating to behaviour.
- The inspector met with representatives from the governing body and the multi-academy trust, including the trust's CEO.
- The views of staff and pupils were gathered through both formal and informal discussions.
- The views of staff, parents and carers were considered through their responses and confidential free-text comments to Ofsted's surveys. The inspector also spoke to parents at the start of the school day.
- To inspect the school's safeguarding arrangements, the inspector talked with pupils and staff and reviewed the school's policies, documents and procedures, including the single central record. The inspector also met with the school's designated safeguarding leads.

Inspection team

Vicky Matthews, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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