

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Thomas Walling Primary Academy

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

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 January 2025

Outcome

Thomas Walling Primary Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Rebecca Hann. This school is part of the Laidlaw Schools 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), Sally Newton, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Susanna Kempe.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive here. They benefit greatly from the school's caring ethos. Decisions are made with pupils' best interests at heart.

The school sets high expectations for its pupils. Pupils' outcomes compare favourably to national averages. The school does all it can to minimise any barriers or challenges that pupils may face.

Pupils behave well. The 'Thomas Walling Way' provides a secure framework against which expected behaviours are set. This is explicitly taught and modelled by all staff. Pupils know what is expected of them at every part of the school day. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils are taught how to listen attentively and to respond to questions appropriately. They are respectful to staff and to each other. Learning takes place undisturbed. Many pupils describe their school as a place of safety and security.

Playtimes are lively and filled with interesting games to play and activities to join in with. From navigating the increasingly challenging obstacle courses to pogo stick competitions, there really is something to satisfy all interests. Staff willingly join in to support pupils in their play and to help them to work cooperatively.

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

The school expects its pupils to learn well and be successful. It has designed its curriculum to reflect this ambition. Across the different subjects, the curriculum is well considered. It identifies the important knowledge that pupils must learn and outlines how the school intends to develop and extend pupils' oracy skills. In most subjects, the curriculum is well embedded, and the school's ambition is realised. For example, in art, older pupils complete sophisticated observational drawings building on the knowledge and skills from previous learning. However, in some subjects, the curriculum is still being embedded. Where this is the case, some pupils' knowledge is less secure. Occasionally, teaching introduces new subject content without checking that pupils' prior knowledge is secure. When this happens, it affects how well pupils progress through the curriculum.

The school's approach to reading is well established and successful. Pupils acquire phonics knowledge securely. Lessons are well sequenced, and staff are well trained to deliver them. Pupils receive lots of opportunities to practise their phonics. Any pupils who fall behind receive effective support to catch up. Most pupils are fluent readers by the end of Year 1. As pupils move through the school, reading remains high priority. Pupils talk about the importance of reading. They are keen to share their favourite stories and authors. They share much excitement when discussing the library's vending machine. This provides added incentive to read more books.

The school recognises that many children arrive in school reticent to write. In the early years, staff work hard to find creative ways to overcome this and to entice children into mark making. This aspect of the school's early writing approach is successful. However, there are inconsistencies in how well the school's writing curriculum is implemented. Sometimes, teaching does not consider well enough the activities pupils complete or the resources that they use. These inconsistencies affect how well pupils learn to form their letters and build writing fluency.

The school swiftly identifies pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff have the expertise they need to support and adapt learning for pupils. As a result, pupils with SEND are fully included in school life and make positive progress through the curriculum. The 'Hub' is a recent additional classroom. It provides space and resources to address pupils' bespoke personal targets.

Pupils benefit from a well-considered personal development programme. It prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils are encouraged to respect others and to demonstrate tolerance. They are taught how to keep themselves safe online and in the wider community. The programme helps to raise pupils' aspirations for future careers. Pupils enjoy these lessons. The 'Laidlaw Foundation' offers enrichment opportunities for all.

Improving pupils' attendance remains high priority for the school. The dedicated welfare team works tirelessly with parents and carers to encourage good attendance. They use all available resources and agencies to help them in their work. Rates of pupils' attendance are improving. Persistent absence is reducing markedly.

Trustees and governors know the school well. They use their extensive skills to support and challenge school leaders. They, along with all school leaders, have facilitated a culture of mutual respect, support and encouragement. This is greatly appreciated by staff, who feel proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, aspects of the curriculum are new and not firmly embedded. In these subjects, pupils' knowledge is sometimes less secure. Occasionally, new subject content is introduced without the checks that pupils have the appropriate prior knowledge. This affects how well pupils progress through the curriculum in these subjects. The school should ensure that in these subjects teaching checks that pupils have the knowledge they need before moving on to new content and that pupils' learning builds securely over time.
- There is some variability in the implementation of the school's approach to developing pupils' early writing skills. This affects how well some pupils learn to write. Sometimes, inaccuracies in pupils' letter formation and transcription skills are not addressed well enough. The school should iron out any inconsistencies so that the teaching of early writing allows all pupils to build strong transcriptional skills in line with the curriculum intentions.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in May 2021.

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	140788
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10346540
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	410
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Susanna Kempe
CEO of the trust	Sally Newton
Headteacher	Rebecca Hann
Website	www.thomaswallingacademy.com
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 May 2021, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Laidlaw Schools Trust.
- The school provides a breakfast club each morning for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- The inspector discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other school leaders.
- The inspector met with members of the governing body and the board of trustees, including the chair of the local governing body and the chair of the board of trustees.
- The inspector spoke with the CEO of the trust along with the trust's Director of Primary School Improvement.

- The inspector visited lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. She also listened to some pupils from Year 1 to Year 3 read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- The inspector analysed school documentation, including leaders' evaluations and plans for improvement. The inspector scrutinised a range of policies and procedures, including those that relate to the curriculum, SEND, safeguarding and behaviour.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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.
- The inspector visited the school's breakfast club.
- The inspector spoke with parents as they dropped off their children at school. She also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and parents' free-text responses.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.

Inspection team

Diane Buckle, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025