

Inspection of Dr Walker's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Fyfield

Walker Avenue, Fyfield, Ongar, Essex CM5 0RG

Inspection dates:

31 January and 1 February 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend Dr Walker's School. The school has a strong sense of togetherness; everyone looks after each other. Pupils are respectful, courteous and kind. Pupils act in line with the Christian ethos of the school. Pupils feel happy, feel safe and cared for. They, and their parents, appreciate the support and encouragement that pupils receive from staff.

Pupils enjoy the many visitors and events that ignite their interest in learning and broaden their knowledge of the wider world. These range from a rabbi to local authors and circus performers.

Pupils are keen to learn and are ambitious to do well. However, the quality of teaching is too frequently not good enough. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not gain the depth and breadth of knowledge that they should.

There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their confidence. They can take on leadership roles. These include positions such as head boys and girls, and subject ambassadors. All pupils learn musical instruments, such as the ukulele, and try out a range of sports including rugby.

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

The school has made significant changes to its curriculum. It has adopted new programmes that identify what pupils need to know and break down knowledge into clear steps. However, the curriculum in Years 1 to 6 is often not delivered as leaders intend. Some teachers do not have strong enough subject knowledge. They do not model learning clearly or accurately. They do not know how to check what pupils know effectively and how to close gaps in their knowledge. As a result, pupils' knowledge is not sufficiently secure in too many areas of the curriculum.

The school promotes and celebrates reading. Pupils read widely. Teachers read to pupils every day. In Reception, children learn to blend sounds, decode words and form increasingly complex sentences; this gives them a solid foundation to develop their reading. Support for weaker readers varies in quality. Interventions are often confidently delivered by knowledgeable staff. As a result, weaker readers become more accurate and fluent. In some instances, however, staff have not received the training to teach reading effectively. In key stage 2, the choice of texts is not carefully mapped. Pupils do not encounter increasingly ambitious and diverse texts that build their knowledge and skills over time.

Teachers adapt tasks to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. However, this is not always done precisely enough. The school is sometimes too slow to identify pupils who need greater support to access the curriculum. Consequently, these pupils do not always gain the knowledge they need to achieve as well as they could.

Children in Reception become increasingly confident and independent; they learn how to do up their coats and care for themselves. They usually play and work well with each other, although some find it hard to share or take turns. The teacher uses spoken language effectively in order to get pupils talking with increasing clarity. Pupils practise counting and adding to develop a secure understanding of number. Children take part in well-planned activities. These help them learn about the world around them.

Pupils attend and behave very well. If pupils do not follow the rules, they reflect on where they have gone wrong. They are given the guidance they need so that they can improve.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They learn about different faiths, democracy and different careers. Older pupils know how their bodies develop and how to keep themselves safe online. In assemblies, pupils learn about being a 'shining light' for others in how they live their lives.

The school has experienced a period where there have been significant challenges, particularly around staffing. Leaders have been highly resilient. They have made important changes to the curriculum, the school environment and to the early years provision. Staff feel supported with their well-being and workload.

Governors are committed and supportive. However, leaders and governors are not rigorous or effective enough in how they check the quality of education in 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)

- Some staff do not have the subject knowledge and skills they need to deliver the curriculum effectively. Consequently, pupils do not gain the knowledge that they need and develop gaps. The school should ensure that staff have the training and support that they need to deliver the curriculum as leaders intend.
- The reading curriculum from Years 3 to 6 is not fully planned or embedded. Pupils do not yet encounter a diverse and increasingly ambitious programme of texts that help to build readers' proficiency and comprehension. The school should ensure that the reading curriculum is carefully designed and fully implemented throughout the school.
- The school does not identify weaknesses in the implementation of the curriculum, including its provision for pupils with SEND, rapidly or precisely enough. Consequently, the quality of pupils' education is not good. Governors must ensure

that leaders are provided with the support and challenge required to swiftly and accurately identify where improvements are needed and to address them.

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 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	115125
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10318094
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Cathryn Adams
Headteacher	Llewellyn Lawson
Website	www.fyfielddrwalkersprimary.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Dr Walker's School is a small rural primary school with a Reception class and three mixed-age classes: Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6.
- This is a Church of England school and part of the Diocese of Chelmsford. The most recent Section 48 Inspection (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) took place on 7 November 2017.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and visited a range of lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with a range of leaders, including the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the local authority and the diocese, as well as members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around school. They met with groups of pupils to discuss behaviour in the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- The lead inspector considered the 24 responses and 22 free-text responses received during the inspection to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. He also considered the 12 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 24 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Steve Woodley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Stuart Pope

Ofsted Inspector

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