

Inspection of Waltham Holy Cross Primary Academy

Quendon Drive, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 1LG

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 March 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Sarah Clarke. This school is part of NET Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jo Coton, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Peter Shephard. There is also an executive headteacher, Jo Coton, who is responsible for this school and five others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils proudly and happily attend this school. They know and live up to the school rules of, 'be kind, stay safe and work hard.' Pupils understand that following the school's values helps create a positive environment, where all can thrive. This is evident in the caring attitudes and good manners that pupils display.

All staff have high expectations for pupils. Pupils behave exceptionally well. They display a highly positive attitude towards their learning. They produce high-quality work.

Pupils learn that education is important and that regular school attendance has many benefits, such as getting a good job and supporting their overall well-being.

The school promotes diversity and encourages pupils to show compassion and kindness to others. Pupils understand that everyone is unique and that this should be celebrated. Additionally, pupils learn about disabilities and how to support others. This knowledge helps to create a happy and inclusive environment for everyone in the school.

Pupils learn about safety. They are clear about the dangers of being online and how to protect themselves. They also learn about other ways to keep safe, such as when crossing the road and fire safety.

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

Historically, the school has been through a period of instability. However, it is now part of a trust and has a new leadership team. The school has made changes that have had a positive impact for pupils, such as a more consistent approach to teaching across all subjects. The school has created a well-considered and ambitious curriculum. This begins in the early years, where children learn to communicate confidently and develop their language skills. This prepares them well for the next stage in their learning and beyond.

Teachers are well-trained and knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. They provide clear and precise instruction to pupils. The school has prioritised English and mathematics to ensure pupils have stronger knowledge in these subjects, as this will support their learning across the curriculum. Teachers check pupils' understanding regularly. The school provides timely and effective support to make sure that pupils do not fall behind. As a result, pupils learn well in many subjects.

In a few subjects, pupils achieve less well. This is due to a legacy of less effective curriculum planning being in place in these subjects; a less robust approach to the checking of effective teaching; and lower pupil expectations. The school has taken effective action to address these issues. There are now effective curriculum plans in place in these subjects. They are in the early stages of being implemented. While

gaps in pupils' knowledge in these subjects are lessening, further adaptations to the curriculum are needed to do so more rapidly.

The school prioritises reading. Children in the Nursery learn basic sounds. They also enjoy learning songs and rhymes. This helps lay the foundations needed to start reading. Children in Reception learn phonics from the very start. Teachers check pupils' progress with reading. The school then provides effective support to help pupils keep up if they find reading difficult. This includes older pupils who find reading tricky. Staff frequently read with the pupils, where they choose books that match pupils' phonics knowledge. This helps pupils to become confident and fluent readers.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly and accurately. The school provides teachers with precise guidance about what these pupils need. Using the school's guidance, teachers arrange effective support and adapt activities when needed. This ensures pupils with SEND reach their learning goals.

Pupils show exceptional behaviour and are highly motivated. They are engaged and focused during lessons. They interact positively with each other during playtimes. Pupils can confidently resolve any conflicts independently but ask for help from friends or adults when they need to. Pupils display good manners and possess self-confidence. They behave calmly and listen attentively to others. They do this even when alone, as they understand its importance.

The school provides many interesting trips and visitors. These help pupils to learn about the wider world. For example, representatives from different faiths help pupils learn more about different religions in modern British society. Pupils enjoy taking on the extra roles and responsibilities on offer at the school. This allows them to help others and develop their leadership skills.

Leaders, the trust, and the governors work together highly effectively. Despite significant challenges with the school building, school improvement has been swift and effective. Notably in the strategic oversight of the school. This is reflected in the consistent expectations of: quality teaching and staff subject knowledge; pupils' excellent behaviours; their quality of work and improving outcomes; and positive attendance rates. The school and the trust collaborate well. Staff appreciate how they can develop their skills, learn from others in the trust and further their careers. They feel very positive about their 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)

- After a period of change, the school curriculum is now well planned and delivered effectively. However, this was not always the case. Pupils have gaps in their knowledge in a few subjects as a result. The school needs to continue its work in addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge by adapting further the curriculum to ensure that pupils achieve well in all subjects.

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).

e School details

Unique reference number	147265
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10318644
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	587
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Shephard
CEO of trust	Jo Coton
Headteacher	Sarah Clarke
Website	whc.netacademies.net
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Waltham Holy Cross Primary Academy opened on 1 November 2019. The predecessor school, Waltham Holy Cross Primary School, was inspected in December 2017 and was judged inadequate overall.
- The school has a different headteacher since the previous inspection.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider of education.

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: early reading, mathematics, computing, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors also gathered further evidence about the quality of education, modern foreign languages and writing, by meeting with leaders, looking at pupils' workbooks, and talking to pupils.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents provided by the school, including development plans and the school's self-evaluation form.
- 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, including attendance, that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors held meetings with the CEO, headteacher, trust curriculum leaders, school-based curriculum leaders and the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator.
- The lead inspector also met with representatives from the trust board and governing body.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. They also considered the online staff survey. The inspectors also spoke to pupils to obtain their opinions.
- Some inspectors talked to parents at the school gate after school.

Inspection team

Jessie Linsley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Danny Wagstaff

Ofsted Inspector

Lisa Massey

Ofsted Inspector

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