

Lordswood School

Lordswood Lane, Chatham, Kent ME5 8NN

Inspection dates

5–6 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Although the school is now improving, the pace of change has not been quick enough to address the legacy of underachievement in order for the school to be judged good.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is uneven across year groups and within subjects. This is particularly the case in reading and mathematics in key stage 2.
- Despite a good start in the early years, pupils do not make good enough progress in key stage 1, where standards by the end of Year 2 are much lower than the national average.
- The level of support and challenge offered to pupils of all abilities is not consistent enough. Consequently, not enough of them make the good or better progress they are capable of.
- Middle leadership is underdeveloped. Middle leaders and subject leaders do not yet have enough impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Governors are not as effective as they should be at holding school leaders to account for improving the school.
- Attendance is not as good as it could be. Levels of persistent absence are too high, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- Despite recent improvements, the behaviour of some pupils still disrupts learning, impacting negatively on the progress that pupils make.
- Outcomes for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are improving, but not quickly enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Since her appointment, the head of school has been effective in laying the foundations for further improvement. The capacity for rapid improvement is now clear to see.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start because of the good quality of provision in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Because the quality of teaching is beginning to improve, most pupils now enjoy coming to school and display good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils benefit from a rich menu of extra-curricular activities including educational visits, sport and clubs. Their pastoral needs are well met.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for pupils by ensuring that:
 - teachers are more consistent in planning work that matches the needs and abilities of all learners, including the most able and those pupils in danger of falling behind
 - pupils' progress in reading and mathematics improves to more closely match the recent rapid improvement seen for writing by the end of Year 6
 - rates of absence, particularly persistent absence of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, are reduced to more acceptable levels, so that most pupils attend school most of the time.
- Increase the impact school that leaders and governors have on improving the school by ensuring that:
 - middle leaders and those responsible for subject leadership are given more responsibility for improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within their specific fields
 - all governors clearly understand the school's priorities for improvement, so that they are better equipped to hold school leaders to account for the progress pupils make.

An independent external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because progress in the past has not been as rapid as it should have been. Recent improvements in leadership, stemming from the appointment of a new head of school, supported by an experienced executive headteacher, are now beginning to have greater impact on improving the school.
- Self-evaluation is effective. School leaders are getting to grips with the aspects that need improving. However, the legacy of underachievement and poor outcomes for pupils will take time to overcome.
- The role that middle and subject leaders play in improving the quality of teaching and learning is underdeveloped. However, recent appointments into key positions are sound, and the capacity for accelerated improvement is clear to see.
- The head of school has galvanised staff and there is a clear and growing sense of purpose to improve the school to be good or better. Results in the online staff survey show very clearly that staff at all levels are on board and willing to move the school forward.
- The curriculum serves pupils well, although information for parents on the school website needs to be better. Cross-curricular links are strong and opportunities for pupils to develop their reading, writing and mathematics skills are carefully woven throughout different subjects.
- Extra-curricular aspects of the wider curriculum are strong. Pupils benefit from an extensive range of clubs and exciting opportunities to stimulate their physical and social and emotional development. Pupils were visibly thrilled when they told the lead inspector about orienteering, foot golf, and an upcoming residential trip where they will experience a wide range of outdoor adventurous activities.
- Staff are beginning to benefit from a range of professional development, closely matched to their own personal needs but also rooted in the school's priorities for improvement. The recent improvement in the school's phonics provision is one example of the positive impact this is having.
- School leaders manage the performance of staff increasingly well. A more joined-up approach to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, including regular progress board meetings arranged by the trust, ensures that leaders and staff are more focused on progress and intervening when pupils are in danger of falling behind.
- Pastoral care is a strength. Leaders have worked hard to ensure the social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects of pupils' development are given a high priority. A values-based ethos pervades the school. Pupils talk openly about respect, honesty and perseverance. Other aspects such as cultural days focusing on ethnic diversity, visits by the Salvation Army, and support for the local food bank all play a part in preparing pupils for life in modern Britain.

- Extra government funding to support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is beginning to have the impact required, as the quality of teaching begins to improve and school leaders ensure a clearer focus on this vulnerable group.
- Primary physical education and sports funding is spent well. The profile of sport is high and the support of a local secondary school is having a positive impact. Attendance at events such as the mini youth games and other county-wide sporting events are all part of the day-to-day sporting offer available to pupils.
- Parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and those who spoke to inspectors, were very positive about the changes they have seen in the last year. They were very clear that they feel the school is improving.
- The support provided by the Griffin Schools Trust has been effective in key aspects of improving the school, although a representative of the trust acknowledged that more progress needs to be made before the school can be judged to be good overall. Support for the head of school from an executive headteacher from within the trust has been positive, as has the impact on improving the early years provision from one of the trust's consultants.

Governance of the school

- Governance is developing, having recently undergone an internal review by the multi-academy trust. As a result of this, governors and members of the trust board have evaluated the impact of the local governing board and remodelled the way it works to support the school.
- While some members of the local governing board are experienced and understand the strategic nature of governance well, some members are new to the role and will require further training and support to become fully effective at working in partnership with school leaders to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Some governors are unclear about the key priorities for school improvement, meaning they are not as effective as they should be at understanding and monitoring key measures of progress, or holding school leaders to account. This situation must improve if governance is to have the positive impact required for the school to make accelerated progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders have ensured that the care and welfare of pupils are paramount. The culture in the school is supportive and caring and staff at all levels understand their responsibilities to keep children safe.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are effective. Records of staff checks are managed efficiently. Staff training is up to date and appropriate for the level of responsibility each individual holds. More importantly, staff are not complacent and are not afraid to challenge outside agencies when they feel the need.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They are able to explain clearly why they feel the school is a safe place and know who to speak to if they have concerns. They are aware of the potential dangers when using the internet or social media and special events such as fire prevention training all contribute to their overall safety. Parents and staff are clear that they feel children are safe at this school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement because outcomes for pupils are still not as good as they should be. Over time, not enough pupils make the good or better progress required to achieve their full potential. In the past, too much teaching failed to engage pupils, leading to poor behaviour and disruptions to learning.
- Where teaching is stronger, pupils are challenged well and keen to learn more. However, not enough teaching fully motivates learners because work is not pitched at the right level, leading to inconsistent progress across year groups and within different subjects. This is particularly the case in key stage 2 where the outcomes in reading and mathematics are not as good as those seen in writing by the end of Year 6.
- Although the situation is improving, too much teaching fails to fully meet the needs of pupils of differing ability. Evidence seen in pupils' books and collected during classroom observations shows that more needs to be done to ensure that lower attaining pupils are better supported with their learning, while most-able pupils, and those capable of achieving at higher levels, need to be more consistently challenged and their learning extended.
- Teaching, learning and assessment in the early years are strong. Because of this, children enjoy their time in school and make good progress. The teaching of phonics is also a growing strength because teachers and support staff have received effective training and are now much better at delivering this crucial element in the early stages of teaching pupils to read and write. Because of the quality of provision in the early years and improvements in phonics teaching, disadvantaged pupils are beginning to make more progress and are getting a better start to their time in school.
- Pupils enjoy reading, but told the lead inspector they wanted more new books and more time to sit on bean bags to read. Higher ability pupils read with confidence and were proud to explain that they were now 'free readers'. Lower ability pupils were hesitant, but equipped with the skills to sound out words on their own, or confident to ask for the help of their friends with words they were struggling with.
- Support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. Teachers and other support staff receive useful guidance from the middle leader with responsibility for this vulnerable group of pupils. As a consequence, their varying needs are met well.
- School leaders have recently introduced a new whole-school system to help teachers plan learning and track pupils' progress. Early indications show that staff are embracing this new tool in order to improve their practice, using it with growing confidence.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The school's values-based culture is growing and the impact this is having on pupils' attitudes to school and learning is very tangible. Older pupils in particular value this approach and know that it underpins everything they do at school.

- The pastoral care of pupils is very strong. Staff work hard at ensuring that the emotional well-being of pupils is a priority. This is all the more impressive when considering the urgent need to address academic standards in order for the school to be judged good. Staff care. They are prepared to go the extra mile. The moral integrity of the head of school is commendable in this regard.
- Pupils are aware of the dangers of bullying and being bullied. They understand what constitutes bullying and explained that sometimes it does happen, although they know what to do and who to speak to if it does. Older pupils said bullying is rare now. One expressed the opinion, 'this is a getting-better school'. The lead inspector had to agree.
- School leaders have ensured that the wider curriculum and special events such as fire safety week help pupils to understand how to stay safe. Pupils could readily explain the potential dangers associated with using the internet and social media. They feel safe in school and told inspectors that staff care for them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In the past, too many behaved poorly because expectations were not high enough and systems to ensure pupils conducted themselves in an appropriate manner were not strong enough.
- A new policy for behaviour, a consistent approach from staff and high expectations, especially from senior leaders, have all had a major impact on improving behaviour. Exclusions, which were used widely and with little effect in the past, have reduced to become almost non-existent.
- Despite the dramatic drop in exclusions, there are still instances of poor behaviour in classrooms and around the school. Inspectors witnessed this during classroom visits and pupils told the lead inspector that, although greatly reduced, there are still occasions when their learning is disrupted.
- Attendance has not been good enough in the past, although it is now improving due to the concerted actions of staff. However, levels of persistent absence, particularly for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, remain too high. School leaders are aware of this and working hard with a minority of families to address the situation.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement. Not enough pupils make the good progress of which they are capable. Although there are now signs of improvement, attainment at the end of key stages 1 and 2 is still not strong enough.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Levels of development by the end of Reception compare favourably with the national average, indicating that children have made good progress from their starting points. Outcomes for disadvantaged children improved dramatically this year. As a result, many more were well prepared for their move into Year 1.
- The school's phonics provision has seen an impressive improvement over the last year, although the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in Year 1 still lags behind the national average. Disadvantaged pupils in particular made strong gains this year. An increasing proportion of pupils are catching up by the end of Year 2, but the percentage of pupils at the expected standard is still well below the national average.

- Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 are lower than those seen nationally. Unvalidated results from this year's national test and assessments show that pupils are still not making the progress of which they are capable. This includes disadvantaged pupils, including most-able disadvantaged pupils and other pupils capable of achieving at higher levels.
- Pupils make inconsistent progress as they move through key stage 2. This is true of different year groups, within different subjects, and for different groups of pupils. Although the quality of teaching is improving, not enough pupils are making the accelerated progress required in reading and mathematics, especially the most able. However, this year's unvalidated outcomes for writing at the end of Year 6 appear to compare very favourably with those seen nationally, for both progress and attainment. More pleasingly, disadvantaged pupils were as successful as others in the school for writing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do increasingly well because of the good and improving provision available to them. Although their progress is also inconsistent across different year groups and within different subjects, more are now making good progress from their differing starting points.

Early years provision

Good

- Provision in the early years is good because of focused leadership and very effective teaching, learning and assessment. Staff in the Nursery and Reception classes work together as a collegiate team and children benefit from a very good start to their time at the school. Support from a specialist consultant from the multi-academy trust has had a good impact on ensuring that the early years provision is now good.
- Teachers and support staff know the children well. Good induction and transition arrangements mean no time is wasted at the start of the school year. Well-planned learning through play is the norm and staff are skilful at extending children with well-pitched questioning, while knowing when to allow them the freedom to explore and discover for themselves.
- Children make good progress in the early years and outcomes are gradually improving. Because of this, the proportion of children moving on to Year 1 who are well prepared for the next stage of their education at least matches the national average this year. The disparity in outcomes seen between boys and girls in the past has been addressed.
- Children are happy here. They behave well and are confident when discussing their learning with visitors. One group, suitably attired in boots and plastic aprons, shared their knowledge of making 'healthy' Halloween cookies in the mud garden. Pretend sugar was added carefully to the mix, but not too much. Important decisions were made about whose turn it was to place the cookies into the oven and how many minutes they should be left for, before the inspector was invited to taste the raw mixture on the end of a muddy spoon, to the delight of all concerned.
- Parents are very positive about the quality of education their children receive in the early years. They appreciate the care and dedication shown by staff and commented on how positive, friendly and helpful they are. Parents also commented positively about improved communication. As in the rest of the school, parents feel their children are safe and thrive in the early years.

School details

Unique reference number	140186
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10019849

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

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	402
Appropriate authority	Griffin Schools Trust
Chair	Jennie Thomas (Chair of the local board)
Headteacher	Jayne Lusinski (Head of school)
Telephone number	03000 658250
Website	www.lordswoodschool.co.uk
Email address	office@lordswoodschool.medway.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Lordswood School is a larger-than-average-sized primary school with Nursery provision.
- This was the first inspection of the school since it converted to academy status and joined the Griffin Schools Trust in November 2013. The Griffin Schools Trust is a multi-academy trust.
- The head of school has been in post for just over a year. She is supported by an executive headteacher from another school within the multi-academy trust.
- The school shares its site with a local authority children's centre.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, additional government funding, is broadly average.

- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the content of their curriculum, or up-to-date special educational needs information. Other content on the school's website was updated during the inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors conducted 13 lesson observations across all phases of the school, some of which were joint observations with school leaders.
- Inspectors also carried out separate learning walks in the early years provision, key stage 1, and upper key stage 2.
- Meetings were held with pupils; parents; the head of school, accompanied by the executive headteacher; other school leaders; teachers; and the 'point governor' of the local governing board.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the Griffin Schools Trust.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work, heard pupils read and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account 34 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff using the online staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including those to do with safeguarding, attendance, minutes of meetings of the local governing board, information about pupils' outcomes provided by the school, the school's self-evaluation of its own performance and the school's development and improvement planning.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Teresa Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Matt Batchelor	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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