

# Larchwood Primary School

Larchwood Gardens, Pilgrims Hatch, Brentwood, Essex CM15 9NG

## Inspection dates

7–8 March 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- Leaders and managers have brought about rapid and significant improvements since the school opened as a sponsored academy.
- Leaders at all levels know the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well and this means that they are well placed to tackle any underperformance. As a result, the vast majority of the pupils make very strong progress across the curriculum.
- The local governing body is exceptionally well led. The executive headteacher and the trust board challenge and support the school in equal measure. This has been key in securing recent improvements.
- The committed, confident staff are ambitious for the school and its pupils.
- Teaching in a wide range of subjects is inspirational. It excites pupils so that they do the very best they can. Many attain highly in national assessment tests.
- Leaders and managers have created a strong culture of safety and this means that the pupils are kept safe from harm.
- Pupils have excellent behaviour and attitudes to their learning. This means that they listen carefully to what adults say to them and respond swiftly to their direction.
- Parents are very positive about all aspects of the school's work.
- Leaders have put effective strategies in place to improve pupils' attendance, which is now in line with national figures.
- Most pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make substantial progress from their starting points. However, assessment is not used well enough to ensure that all make enough progress.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start. They benefit from exciting and interesting activities which means that they make good progress and achieve well.
- The early years provision is not outstanding because the initial assessments of the children when they start school are not accurate enough to ensure that all their individual needs are well met.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Meet the needs of all pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including in the early years, by using assessment more effectively to plan learning.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- Parents and staff at Larchwood Primary School are highly positive about leadership changes and they are justifiably proud to be associated with the school. Improvements under the current leadership have been rapid and significant. Weak performance has been eradicated so that pupils benefit from teaching which is of a very high quality.
- The headteacher communicates his high expectations to pupils, staff and parents and this means that all stakeholders share his vision for continuous improvement.
- The headteacher is well supported by his senior leaders, who know very well the strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility. They have well-thought-out action plans to address those few areas which are in need of further improvement.
- Leaders at all levels are keenly ambitious for the school. They know its strengths and next steps and plan effectively to expedite improvements. Since the school became an academy, all aspects of its work have improved significantly because of the relentless focus on making sure that the pupils get the very best deal they can.
- Staff who are new to the school speak highly of the impact of their induction, which started before they took up post. They say that they are benefiting from a wide range of training which is highly appropriate to their career stage. New staff cite examples of the difference that the way their work is reviewed has made to their classroom practice.
- Teachers reflect on their teaching and are given opportunities to discuss pupils' learning in pupil progress meetings, in staff meetings and less formally. As a result, pupils benefit from high-quality teaching so that they make very good gains in their understanding.
- The support for the school's most vulnerable pupils is effective overall. Disadvantaged pupils regularly make better progress than their peers because pupil premium funding is used carefully and well. However, the teacher with responsibility for ensuring high-quality provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not yet rigorous enough in making sure that all of these pupils make substantial progress. This means that the additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not used as effectively as it could be.
- Larchwood's curriculum is broad and balanced. It is based around topics where relevant. It excites the pupils and this means that they make rapid progress. Leaders took the opportunity of the new primary national curriculum to devise a useful toolkit to support teachers in their planning. The pupils' books show that the links which the teachers make between different subjects are effective. For example, in computing, Year 5 pupils developed a diagram for an algorithm to create and add music to a game. This enhanced their skills, not only in computing, but also in mathematics, English and music.
- There is a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities which are well attended by the pupils and which enable them to develop their independence and increase their responsibility.

- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and fundamental British values exceptionally well. These sit at the heart of the school's vision and mission. The pupils speak authoritatively about democracy: 'Democracy is where everyone has their say.' When asked about British values, they quoted liberty, respect and tolerance and could give examples of each.
- The sports premium is used effectively. Leaders have brought in a new physical education curriculum to support the teachers and develop their confidence and skills in teaching sports. As a result of this funding, participation and achievements in competitions have improved considerably.
- The teacher with responsibility for the early years is passionate about the outcomes for the children in her care. However, assessments are not always used effectively to ensure that all children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make rapid progress from their starting points.

### **Governance of the school**

- The local governing body and the Brentwood Academies Trust are extremely effective at supporting leaders to make significant improvements to all aspects of school life. They have a wide range of useful skills and experience.
- The chair of the local governing body sets an excellent example to her colleagues. She guides governors effectively as they check progress against the school's priorities. The reports which governors write after each visit are useful because they include information on the strengths of the school, along with some suggestions for consideration by the governing body.
- Governors know the school very well. They are fully aware of the achievements of the pupils because they track their progress very carefully. They check that the various groups of pupils are doing at least as well as their peers in school and nationally. Further work is required to ensure more rapid progress of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in the early years so that these children do as well as those in key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- Governors are aware of the link between performance and pay, and the process they would need to follow if one of the teachers did not meet expectations.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Parents who responded to Parent View all agreed that their children are safe and are well cared for.
- Safeguarding threads through everything the school does. Every care is taken to ensure that the school is safe and that procedures are rigorous. Designated staff are tenacious in following up safeguarding concerns with external agencies. They are not afraid to challenge external agencies where practice does not meet their own high expectations.
- Policies which relate to safeguarding are well organised and are fully understood by staff, who benefit from regular and up-to-date training to enable them to fulfil their statutory duties.

- The checks on staff when they begin work at the school are rigorous and meet statutory requirements.
- Safeguarding records are robust and are extremely carefully kept. They are completed with great accuracy.
- Governors have a clear understanding of their specific safeguarding responsibilities.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Outstanding

- The quality of teaching is consistently good and highly effective because teachers promote mutual respect, high expectations and a determined attitude from the pupils, who want to do their best.
- Teachers know their subjects very well. This means that they are able to support pupils to consolidate their learning and stretch them to tackle trickier activities. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, the teacher planned a mathematics activity which required the pupils to find missing angles in composite shapes. One of the pupils said, 'It's hard but I want to do it.'
- Teachers are very skilled at building up the pupils' learning and this means that they give them plenty of opportunities to practise their knowledge and skills. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, the teacher introduced the key components of a story gradually so that, by the end of the lesson, the vast majority of pupils were able to retell it accurately.
- Teachers and teaching assistants routinely ask probing questions which allow the pupils time to think and so they come up with sophisticated answers. For example, in a Year 2 English lesson, pupils were asked to choose from the various spellings of the sound 'ear', such as 'eer', 'ere' and 'ier', and they came up with vocabulary such as 'sphere' and 'pier', which were new words for some of them.
- Teachers take great care to check the understanding of pupils and, in most cases, this leads to good gains in their learning. Teachers target questions to individual pupils to stretch and challenge them.
- Teachers plan effectively to meet the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language. This means that these pupils make good gains in their learning. Those who enter school speaking very little English quickly catch up so that they are working at a similar standard to the rest of their peers.
- Teachers' feedback is in line with the school's policy. It provides specific guidance to the pupils and this helps them to improve. Leaders have rightly identified the need to do more about teaching pupils to transfer their skills between different genres and apply their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills well across a range of subjects. Pupils' workbooks indicate that pupils are doing better in these areas because teachers are giving more time in lessons to this aspect of learning.
- The most able pupils in the school, including those who are disadvantaged, are also making substantial progress. Their books show that they are mastering key concepts. They report that they are well challenged in lessons. Inspectors confirmed this to be the case. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson, the most able pupils spoke of how judgements of character are made easily from sight but that character traits can be

hidden.

- Pupils' workbooks show a broad range of opportunities across subjects to deepen their understanding and to apply skills. For example, in Year 5, the most able pupils used technical vocabulary appropriately to hypothesise, predict and introduce variables to write a science experiment. Their spelling and presentation were as strong as those found in their mathematics and English books. The vibrant displays around the school show a rich range of work, for example in geography, history and art.
- Leaders have implemented an assessment system which gives helpful information about the progress of individuals and groups of pupils from their starting points. Closer scrutiny of assessments indicates that they are not always used as effectively as they might be to plan tasks which meet the needs of some of the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils' attitudes to their own learning and that of their peers are excellent and have a strong impact on their progress. For example, pupils are mutually supportive and help one another when they find work difficult. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, an inspector heard a pupil ask 'What would happen if you added those two together? Why is that?' This opportunity reinforced the self-esteem of both of the pupils.
- Pupils are well aware of how to behave in a range of social contexts and willingly cooperate with their peers in a variety of activities, such as those provided in the breakfast and after-school clubs. Staff who supervise the pupils in these clubs take good care of the pupils who attend and support their learning by providing well-chosen activities, such as reading for pleasure and board games which develop pupils' social skills.
- Breaktimes are harmonious because pupils willingly play together. They talk and laugh with each other. They told the inspectors that they enjoy taking turns on the new playground equipment. Incidents of bullying, racism or racial prejudice are extremely rare and leaders work successfully to address any incidents that occur.
- Leaders prepare pupils very well for secondary school. Pupils are academically ready and are mature in their attitudes. They have additional responsibilities, such as being play leaders and listening to younger pupils read, and this means that they are becoming well-rounded members of society.
- Most pupils in key stage 1 choose to take advantage of the fruit on offer to them during break to snack on and this indicates that they are aware of the need to keep themselves healthy. High-quality teaching in physical education, along with the numerous extra-curricular and inter-school sporting events, contributes very well to developing pupils' physical well-being.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online and understand how to use what they learn in school when they are at home or at their friends' homes. They clearly articulate what the school's strapline for online safety – 'Safe, meet, accept, reliable,

tell' – means to them.

- Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain. Teaching helps them to understand about people with different backgrounds, cultures and beliefs.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Behaviour in lessons is often exemplary because pupils are fully absorbed in the excellent learning opportunities they have. On the rare occasion when an adult has to speak to pupils about their conduct, pupils respond swiftly to their direction.
- Behaviour around the school is very positive because the pupils respect all members of the school community. They know right from wrong and take charge of their own behaviour to make sure that they abide by the school's high expectations.
- Although behaviour is outstanding, leaders are not complacent. They provide effective additional support for the very few pupils who find managing their own behaviour slightly more difficult.
- Attendance is average. Leaders have recognised that this needs to improve and have put in place a series of rigorous strategies to address this. They include an analysis of the attendance of individual pupils and meetings with the deputy headteacher for the parents of all pupils whose attendance falls below 90%. Plans are in hand to ensure that the parents of disadvantaged pupils whose attendance is below 95% meet with him so that he can reinforce the importance of good attendance. Attendance is improving as a result of leaders' more robust checks.
- Where pupils are at risk of missing education because of low attendance, leaders contact colleagues in the local authority and follow up with home visits or welfare checks with the local police force.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Outstanding

- The pupils currently in the school are making very strong progress. Across the year groups, pupils make progress that is always good, and often excellent, in reading, writing and mathematics. Across the other subjects of the curriculum, the school's assessment systems and work in pupils' books show that they are making good progress and are working at the appropriate standards for their ages.
- The outcomes of the Year 1 phonics screening checks in 2015 and 2016 were well above average. The proportion of pupils who took the check again when they were in Year 2 exceeded the national figure. The teaching of phonics is strong in the school and this means that this very positive picture looks set to continue.
- In 2016, the proportion of Year 2 pupils who reached the expected standard in the national assessments and those who were judged to be working at greater depth were well above average. The school's assessments show that these pupils made good progress across key stage 1.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils in Year 6 who made substantial progress in reading, writing and mathematics was well above the national average. The proportions who

reached the expected standard and those who were assessed as working at greater depth were well above average.

- Disadvantaged pupils in all year groups are making at least the same progress as their peers in the school in reading, writing and mathematics. In some cases, they are making very strong progress. On the very odd occasion that disadvantaged pupils, including the most able who are disadvantaged, had not made enough progress last year, the school's assessments show that they have now caught up.
- Pupils benefit from a range of catch-up sessions and small-group work, such as mathematics and English meetings, to help them catch up and these are effective in accelerating their progress.
- All but a few of the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress from their starting points which is at least good, and often substantial, because provision is almost always effective in meeting their learning needs. However, a small number of pupils across the school, including in the early years, who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not making the best progress they can. Their needs are not identified effectively enough, especially in the early years, to ensure rapid progress.
- Parents are very complimentary about their children's learning. They comment that the school has helped their children do well.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- Children enter the school with starting points which are typical for their age.
- The early years provision is not yet outstanding because not all children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make rapid progress from their various starting points.
- Early years staff work well with parents. An inspector watched a group of children with their parents in a workshop with a focus on understanding the world. The leader responsible for the early years showed the parents how the children were prepared to understand the wider world. The leader then gave the parents some examples of activities they could do with their children to support their learning at home. The parents told the inspector that they felt better informed and prepared to assist their children at home.
- The teacher responsible for leading the early years ensures that safeguarding is effective and that all welfare requirements are met. Routines are well established and this means that the children feel safe to take risks with their learning.
- Relationships between children and staff are highly positive so that behaviour is good and levels of trust are high. The environment is calm and nurturing. This contributes to the classrooms being positive places of learning. Children settle well to the various activities and listen carefully to what the adults have to say to them.
- Adults provide a broad range of well-resourced activities and, as a result, children who begin with skills and knowledge that are in line with their ages, and some with starting points which are below those which are typical for their ages, make good progress. This means that the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is



much greater than that found nationally.

- Sometimes, adult interaction is not as effective as it needs to be because the adults do not promote curiosity or encourage the children to think for themselves to solve problems.
- Phonics is taught well in the early years, with teaching that is engaging and varied. Typically, sessions start with a song naming the letters and the sounds they make to reinforce previous learning. The children then make their way to different phonics groups where teaching is focused either on making sure that each child knows the sounds of the day or challenging the children to learn the next sound.
- The leader works tirelessly to make sure that the early years is the best it can be. However, close scrutiny of performance information uncovered some inaccuracies with regard to the progress which children are making because the baseline from which this progress is measured is not as reliable as it should be. This means that adults do not plan consistently well enough to take children's learning forward.
- For some children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, provision does not meet their needs well enough because the planned activities are too easy or too difficult. The additional adults do not consistently provide effective support and challenge.

## School details

Unique reference number	140828
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10030636

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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	252
Appropriate authority	Brentwood Academies Trust
Chair	Kanta Wild-Smith
Headteacher	Ryan Duff
Telephone number	01277 372 450
Website	<a href="http://www.larchwoodprimary.co.uk/">www.larchwoodprimary.co.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@larchwood.essex.sch.uk">office@larchwood.essex.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is of average size and the roll is increasing. There are two classes in the Reception Year and two classes in Year 1. A new class is being added each September as the school becomes fully two-form entry.
- The pupils are largely from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average but numbers are rising.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is larger than that found in schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is smaller than in most schools.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

- The school meets the government floor standards that set out the minimum expectations for primary schools.
- The governors of the school manage a breakfast club and an after-school club.
- The headteacher took up post in January 2013. Following an Ofsted inspection some six months later which placed the school in an Ofsted category of concern, the school became an academy, sponsored by St Martin's Secondary School, which is a local outstanding school. Larchwood is part of Brentwood Academies Trust. The headteacher has recently provided external support for a local school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes and also made shorter visits to classrooms.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other school leaders and teachers who started the school this academic year.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of pupils' work with school leaders.
- The lead inspector met with a group of two governors from the local governing body, the executive headteacher and the chair of the trust.
- To gain their views of the school, inspectors spoke informally to pupils in lessons, around the school and on the playground. An inspector met formally with a group of pupils who also gave her a tour of the school. Some pupils in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 6 read to an inspector.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation relating to safeguarding, pupils' achievements, leadership and governance.
- Inspectors spoke to parents on the playground at the start of day one of the inspection and considered 108 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered 22 responses to the online staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Helen Jones, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Coton	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Jones	Ofsted Inspector

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