

# Lace Hill Academy

Catchpin Street, Lace Hill, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire MK18 7RR

## Inspection dates

18–19 September 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</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 a good school

- The headteacher has worked with mounting assurance since the school's inception in 2015, establishing a very effective provision. Pupils concur and appreciate all that is on offer.
- Up until this point, the headteacher, leaning appropriately upon helpful external expertise, has worked predominantly self-reliantly. Following the appointment of the deputy headteacher, the school's leadership structure now has greater breadth and depth. Nevertheless, the school's middle leadership tier remains underdeveloped.
- School leaders and trustees have a sound view of how well the school is performing and where it needs to do better. However, their oversight of the school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is less secure.
- Pupils achieve well, particularly in key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. In key stage 2, some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are not yet achieving their full potential, particularly in writing.
- Pupils talk excitedly about reading and their favourite books. Most, from the earliest stages, quickly develop a secure love of reading for pleasure.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled and make a positive difference to pupils' achievements.
- Most pupils make good progress because of effective teaching, including in the early years. However, some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly in writing, are not demanding enough.
- Transition arrangements, including in the early years, are highly effective. Pupils who join the school at various stages settle quickly into the swing of what is expected.
- Many parents and carers, including those relatively new to the school, are full of praise for the school's provision. However, some noted that the school's communication with families could be strengthened.
- Most pupils behave well and attend regularly. However, a minority of disadvantaged pupils are absent too often.
- The school's work, including that of the local governing board, to promote equality and diversity is first rate. Strategies to eliminate incidents of racism completely have been highly successful.
- Children make good progress in their early years. They benefit from highly positive and nurturing relationships with adults. However, the quality of leadership of this department is at an early stage.

## Full report

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

- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management, including that of trustees, by:
  - distributing leadership responsibilities more widely so that those responsible develop greater ownership of the standards that pupils achieve, including in the early years
  - establishing more robust systems linked to the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
  - further strengthening communication with families
  - improving disadvantaged pupils' attendance.
- Accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils, particularly in writing in key stage 2, by ensuring that teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher has risen admirably to all the wide-ranging challenges that opening a new school can yield. The quality of education that is evolving is secure and a strong sense of community is taking hold. One parent, encapsulating the views of others, commented: 'My child is always very excited about attending school and is receiving a well-rounded education from a well-run and managed school that truly has the children's best interests at its core.'
- Leaders have contended well with the rapid expansion of the school, establishing systems and processes that meet requirements and are fit for purpose. At this early stage in the school's development, leaders are beginning to evaluate the school's effectiveness, drawing on a range of sources, including their own monitoring activity and analysis of school performance information. However, their evaluation of strengths and weaknesses within departments and subjects, such as within the early years, remains at an emergent phase.
- Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning diligently, while also keeping a watchful eye on the effectiveness of the school's curriculum. This enables them to make well-judged and often timely adaptations that then often bear fruit. For example, leaders successfully reshaped pupils' experience in mathematics after noticing that Year 2 pupils were struggling to tell the time. By enriching this aspect, standards rose dramatically, so that this year more pupils have started key stage 2 with a greater depth of understanding about analogue time.
- The school's special educational needs coordinator knows pupils and their families well. However, lines of communication to agree and share pupils' individual plans and targets tend to be on the hoof. Leaders' oversight of this aspect is not methodical enough. Nevertheless, staff, including highly skilled teaching assistants, are having a positive impact on the progress that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make overall.
- The curriculum is well planned and is enhanced by a range of activities, clubs, trips and visits. The inspection coincided with a Year 6 e-safety theatre visit to a local secondary school. Such opportunities, while enhancing pupils' awareness of personal safety, also help to develop pupils' familiarity with life at secondary school.
- Sports funding is used very effectively. Pupils achieve very well in a range of activities including swimming. Many pupils are able to swim 25 metres by the end of Year 5, the standard expected at the end of key stage 2. Leaders prioritise all aspects of pupils' well-being.
- Leaders have bolstered their effectiveness by using external advisers to support their work. They take note of recommendations and over time have begun to strengthen the work of the school.
- Pupils experience different faiths and cultures including visiting special places of worship in Year 5. They enjoy learning about the backgrounds of pupils in the class who come from different heritages, such as when learning about Diwali. They talk respectfully about people from diverse backgrounds.

- The majority of parents are satisfied with the school's provision and most would recommend it to other parents. One parent commented: 'Lace Hill Academy offers a fantastic education. My children love attending school as the staff make learning so exciting and engaging. The teachers are approachable and know my children well. I cannot recommend the school highly enough.'
- Senior leaders take good account of parents' and pupils' views when evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, a small number of parents feel that the school's communication could be strengthened further so they are fully versed about the school's work.

## **Governance of the school**

- The trust's chief executive officer (CEO), preferring the title of executive headteacher, visits the school regularly, to support the headteacher. The CEO has a reasonable grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, the trust's strategic oversight and challenge for school leaders is at an early stage.
- The trust partner schools have given valuable support to the school, working together to establish and then strengthen the quality of provision. The headteacher has received helpful support and encouragement in his first few years of senior leadership, including from the trust's CEO.
- The local governing board is highly effective. Governors know the school well and can describe 'the buzz' they experience first-hand during their monitoring visits. They contribute strongly to the development of effective systems. Governors keep a close eye on the school's safeguarding procedures and ensure that these are compliant with the latest government guidance.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders prioritise pupils' well-being and safety. Pupils' safety has been well considered since the opening of this purpose-built school. For example, fencing provides helpful segregation between vehicle areas and pedestrianised zones. The signing-in system for visitors adds another helpful layer of vigilance, as all visitors to the school are checked before entering the building.
- Leaders share helpful safety information with parents through the school's website and also regular workshops. Governors too prioritise keeping pupils safe, rightly keeping pupils' online safety near the top of their agenda.
- Staff and governors are well trained to protect pupils, particularly those who are vulnerable. Pupils say that they feel safe because they know that staff will help them.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Leaders track pupils' progress closely, including for groups. They have ensured that relatively new systems are fully understood, including by teachers and governors. Moreover, teachers make good use of pupils' performance information to plan tasks

that meet a range of pupils' needs and abilities well.

- Coupled with effective teaching, leaders' foresight in adapting the school's mathematics key stage 1 curriculum has paid dividends. The teaching of mathematics is effective. Teachers plan activities well and select appropriate resources that support pupils' understanding well. Standards are now higher, and most pupils are working at age-related expectations in this subject.
- The teaching of reading is effective. One parent noted: 'I'm amazed at how rapidly his [my child's] knowledge of reading has grown. I have found parent workshops very helpful to understand and help with how he learns.' Pupils enthuse about reading times, both at home and at school, holding all reading activities in the highest regard. One pupil effused: 'We are read to every day, and it's great!'
- Recently, the school has experienced some variable arrangements to teaching. Nevertheless, leaders cope well with the additional challenges that this can bring. Senior leaders challenge underperformance if necessary and offer insightful support to those at an early stage of their careers. Leaders are successful in ensuring that there are high levels of consistency from class to class.
- Parents are highly satisfied with the quality of teaching that their children receive. One parent noted: 'Lace Hill Academy offers a fantastic education. My children love attending school as the staff make learning so exciting and engaging. The teachers are approachable and know my children really well.'
- Pupils have opportunities to write for a range of purposes and this supports their mastery of written language well, particularly in key stage 1. In key stage 2, pupils, including the disadvantaged, are not yet making the rapid progress required in writing to catch up from lower starting points.
- Teaching assistants are skilled and understand how to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities effectively. Staff are positive about the training on offer and are proud to be members of the Lace Hill team. They appreciate the support they receive.
- Teachers ask pupils questions effectively to check and reinforce their knowledge and understanding, but sometimes they fail to ask questions that challenge pupils to deepen their understanding and extend their learning.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Parents speak highly of their child's smooth transition into school. Staff are alert to helping pupils, including those in the early years, settle in well and quickly gain confidence in the adults who care for them. One parent commented: 'My son only started in Reception a few weeks ago but the transitional process has been very pleasing. The school has provided opportunities for questions and concerns to be asked, to observe my child in his Nursery setting and visit us at home. It is more than comforting to have these additional visits.'
- The whole school community including parents, governors and pupils appreciate the

school's diversity and the positive impact this has on their day-to-day experiences. One pupil commented: 'We are all Lace Hill. It's like a family.'

- Pupils are adamant that bullying doesn't happen in the school. The anti-bullying ambassadors are clear on their roles and know what to do should the need arise. Leaders are assured that the work of these ambassadors is of high quality, affirming that pupils are able to 'take the helm' when required.
- Pupils understand the school's 'golden rules' and live up to these expectations in all aspects of their schooling. Pupils say that they are well cared for and a strong ethos of respect pervades.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including when using the internet. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View agreed that their children are happy and feel safe at school.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are rare. When the number of racist incidents did increase marginally last year, leaders were highly effective at taking prompt action. This has significantly eliminated any reoccurrence. Pupils are confident that racism is not an issue within the school.
- Most pupils attend regularly, and the school's attendance rate is broadly average. Despite leaders' tenacious efforts there is still a minority of pupils who are persistently absent, including disadvantaged pupils. Pupils know what is expected, telling inspectors that good attendance is 'terribly important here'.
- Pupils are attentive in lessons and concentrate on the task in hand well. Lessons are purposeful, and pupils tackle new learning tasks with grit and determination to succeed. However, some pupils are at an early stage of developing self-assurance and curiosity to go beyond what is expected.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- In 2018, pupils in Year 2 achieved well in reading, writing and mathematics. In mathematics, standards rose notably as more pupils achieved the standard expected for their age compared to the previous year.
- The most able pupils achieve well. The proportion of pupils who exceeded the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1 in 2018 is likely to be above that seen nationally.
- In 2018, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development at the end of the early years is likely to be in line with that seen nationally. Children are well prepared for the challenges of key stage 1.
- Outcomes in reading are particularly strong. The vast majority of pupils have success in the Year 1 phonics check, including those belonging to the 2018 cohort. Pupils enthuse about reading and thoroughly enjoy putting their skills to good use.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics particularly in key

stage 1. As these pupils have moved through the school, they have benefited from teaching that knows and meets their needs well.

- This year, the school has the full array of age groups, including Year 6, for the very first time. Leaders acknowledge that some key stage 2 pupils, including Year 6, who have not attended the school for the duration of their schooling, have some catching up to do to secure age-related expectations, particularly in writing.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children enter the early years with knowledge and skills that are generally typical for their age. From their starting points, children make good progress during their first few terms because of good teaching. Teaching is planned well and appeals strongly to children's interests.
- The youngest children get off to a terrific start in the school's Nursery department. Parents are universally satisfied with the high-quality schooling their children receive. One parent noted: 'My daughter started in the Nursery when she turned three and is thriving and enjoying coming to school. She is happy and well looked after ... It is the best introduction to schooling for my three-year-old she could have got.'
- Recently, transition arrangements have strengthened and now helpfully include home visits for all new children. As a result, despite this early stage in the academic year, children in the early years are settled in and exude confidence and security.
- Transition onwards into key stage 1 is also highly effective. One parent exemplified the views of others, saying: 'The transition from a different pre-school to Reception at Lace Hill was very well organised and put our child's needs first, with plenty of opportunities for our child to visit the school in the term before starting. Our child comes home happy with lots to share about her day.'
- Children achieve well at the end of their early years phase. Leaders ensure that children are introduced gently to the routines and expectations of Year 1 in the preceding summer term. This is helpful as pupils settle into key stage 1 from the word go. Most children are well prepared for the challenges of Year 1.
- Teaching assistants contribute well to providing children with a positive experience of the early years. They readily adopt the role of active play partners, modelling language effectively and forming positive relationships with the youngest children. Adults' interactions with children exemplify the school's values of 'learning, aspiration and happiness'.
- Staff in the early years department, including teaching assistants, meet regularly as a team. There is excellent communication between staff in each phase. Although there is an understanding of strengths and weaknesses, strategic oversight and know-how is at an early stage. For example, leaders' action planning focuses on operational issues rather than strengthening outcomes for children.
- The youngest children develop very positive attitudes to reading and sharing books with adults. Adults, including teaching assistants, provide appealing interactions, including in the school's first-rate library. The youngest children can confidently express views. For example, one child, when talking about his book, was able to tell his

classmates: 'I chose it because I love crocodiles.'



## School details

Unique reference number	140207
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10053386

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	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	122
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Chris Garlick
Headteacher	Mr Gareth Griffiths
Telephone number	01280 823 747
Website	<a href="http://www.lacehillacademy.co.uk">www.lacehillacademy.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@lacehillacademy.co.uk">office@lacehillacademy.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Lace Hill Academy is an average-sized primary school.
- The school opened in September 2015 under the leadership of the current headteacher.
- The school is part of the Bourton Meadow Education Trust. The trust has recently expanded and now includes five schools, including two in Northamptonshire.
- The deputy headteacher took up her leadership appointment in September 2018, after serving as a class teacher in the school since it opened.
- The majority of pupils are White British. Others come from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is below the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school uses an outsider provider to run a breakfast club and an after-school club on site.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other leaders with significant responsibilities. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust. The lead inspector also met with three governors, including the chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors visited 17 lessons or part-lessons, nine with senior leaders, visiting every class.
- Inspectors listened to three pupils read in Year 3, looked at work in pupils' books and discussed pupils' progress and attainment with leaders.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally and also met with a group of pupils in key stage 2 from a range of year groups.
- Parents' views were considered through the 71 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 38 free-text comments. An inspector also met parents as they arrived.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the school's education adviser.
- Inspectors considered 20 responses to the staff survey and 25 responses to the pupils' survey. The inspection team also considered the school's own surveys.
- Inspectors scrutinised records and documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, the early years, leaders' monitoring activities and school improvement planning.
- Inspectors reviewed the checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.

## Inspection team

Elizabeth Farr, lead inspector

Lizzie Jeanes

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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