

Liss Junior School

Hillbrow Road, Liss, Hampshire GU33 7LQ

Inspection dates

25–26 September 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the previous inspection the headteacher has successfully driven improvements to raise standards of achievement. She has relentlessly improved teaching and learning.
- Parents appreciate the many improvements that leaders have implemented. Pupils say that they spend more time learning than they used to do, and they are positive about this change.
- Governors know the school well and make regular checks to ensure that the school continues to move in the right direction. They share the headteacher's determination that in time, the very recent federation of the infant and junior schools will secure the highest possible standards.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge means that lessons help pupils to develop their skills and knowledge. Pupils' good progress is particularly noticeable in mathematics, where outcomes were previously weaker.
- Throughout the school there are high expectations for all pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. They work hard, are well supported and are rightly proud of their efforts.
- The school has an effective resource provision for pupils who have education, health and care plans. Lessons are carefully planned to meet individual needs.
- Differences in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils are narrowing as a result of leaders' focused efforts. Current disadvantaged pupils achieve as successfully as other pupils with the same starting points.
- Pupils are rarely absent from school. They behave well and show respect for others. They enjoy playing together in the school's well-resourced outside spaces.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school at all times. They have supportive relationships with teachers and trust them to sort out any concerns they raise.
- The curriculum makes increasing demands of pupils. The wider curriculum subjects engage pupils well. However, learning is not as well planned or led as it is in English and mathematics. Consequently, pupils' progress and work in other subjects are not as strong.
- Senior leaders have not had enough time for all of their recent improvement strategies to be fully effective. Consequently, some variability remains in teaching. Teachers do not consistently use their assessments to match learning activities to meet the needs of pupils who fall behind, particularly in writing.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen recent improvements in the teaching of English and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - teachers use their assessments of pupils' learning consistently well to meet individual pupils' needs
 - support is precisely matched, particularly in writing, enabling more rapid progress for pupils who have fallen behind in their learning.
- Improve the leadership of the wider curriculum subjects so that pupils' understanding of subject-specific skills and knowledge deepens and enables them to make strong progress across all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher communicates a clear and ambitious vision for the school. Her dedicated efforts to improve teaching and learning have proved pivotal to the school's success since its last inspection. She is well supported by her team of assistant headteachers, who are growing in their strength and influence, and by the wider staff team.
- Parents are firmly behind the recent improvements that the headteacher has led. One parent described the school's change as 'phenomenal'. Typical comments included, 'The school has improved dramatically over the past two years. Teachers seem more organised and engaged and I feel my child has made greater progress. It feels like the school is on a real upward swing.'
- Leaders check pupils' progress carefully in order to identify if they are falling behind. In-depth discussions take place with teachers to consider how gaps in learning can best be addressed. This approach helps most pupils to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, as well as to develop personal, social and emotional skills. Leaders for English and mathematics have yet to eliminate some of the inconsistencies in teaching for some pupils.
- Senior leaders provide effective training for staff, helping them to develop confidence and improve their professional skills. Leaders accurately recognise strengths and weaknesses in teaching and they provide timely support and challenge to staff. They acknowledge that the school's 'journey of improvement' is far from complete and their focused actions need to continue.
- Leaders and governors have a clear commitment to be inclusive so that every pupil achieves his or her best, irrespective of each individual's needs and ability. The special educational needs coordinator's expertise makes a strong contribution to provision for all pupils, and especially for low-attaining pupils. The high-quality resource provision adds to all staff members' overall understanding of how to promote high standards for this pupil group. Nevertheless, some aspects of classroom practice remain at a developmental stage, particularly where pupils have gaps in their learning.
- Pupil premium funding strengthens disadvantaged pupils' progress and develops their positive attitudes towards school. Leaders have used the additional monies to support overall improvements to classroom provision and by providing bespoke support for pupils to develop social and emotional skills, such as through a lunchtime club that helps pupils with friendship skills.
- Senior leaders provide many opportunities for parents to be involved in what their children do at school, such as through parent workshops, weekly newsletters, events and formal opportunities to meet teachers. Parents acknowledge that staff are approachable and the overwhelming majority of them are positive about all aspects of the school.
- Leaders have benefited from local authority support to train the governing body and to develop the leadership skills of the assistant headteachers. Advisers have played an active role in supporting leaders to improve the quality of teaching.

- The curriculum offers a breadth of valuable learning opportunities across different subjects. It is enhanced by after-school activities and meaningful educational visits that help pupils to appreciate the county's rich heritage. Leaders have successfully adapted the curriculum to respond to boys' lower rates of progress without any detriment to the girls. Teachers select themes and resources in English lessons to have broad appeal, such as the use of detective fiction.
- Leaders actively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example through links with a school in Uganda. The curriculum challenges pupils to think meaningfully about people in difficult circumstances, such as refugees fleeing from conflict.
- The school's physical education and sport funding is used effectively to increase pupils' active participation in a range of different sports. All pupils enjoy lively sessions with expert coaches. The funding has recently been used for a project designed to build character, helping pupils to develop healthy attitudes towards practical teamwork.
- The impact of leaders' work in the different subject areas is variable. Consequently, the school's culture of high expectations is not consistently realised across the curriculum. Leadership is not fully developed to ensure that learning in all subjects is planned progressively so as to deepen pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding and raise standards further.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has very recently reorganised in order to provide leadership across the two federated schools. Governors from the infant and junior schools have provided a clear steer, bringing them together for the benefit of pupils and parents in the community. They share the headteacher's passion and commitment to ensure that all pupils achieve well.
- Governors are knowledgeable about their role and responsibilities. A core of governors from the junior school has transferred to the new governing body. They know the school well and are realistic about its growing strengths and remaining weaknesses.
- Although the governing body works collaboratively with the headteacher, the governors robustly hold her to account for the school's continual improvement. They ask probing questions, enabling them to be informed about the outcomes of different pupil groups and the quality of teaching, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Governors ensure that pupil premium funding is used effectively for the purpose for which it is intended. In order to ask challenging questions, governors have worked diligently to understand the detail of performance information for this small group of pupils, as well as for those who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School staff are vigilant in their work to keep pupils safe from harm. They ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The two designated safeguarding leads know the pupils who are vulnerable and their families particularly well. They

ensure that all staff share any concerns and support them well, especially the pastoral staff. Leaders work effectively with other professionals to ensure that support is readily available for families and children. A family support worker liaises closely with pupils and parents, providing them with early support where it is needed.

- The school provides a caring environment where pupils of all ages say that they feel safe. The curriculum helps pupils to stay safe, for example when they use technology. Pupils learn about different types of bullying, although they say that there is very little in school and, when it occurs, they trust the adults to act quickly to sort it out.
- Staff and governors are well trained in line with their responsibilities and designated leaders ensure that staff are regularly updated. The school's single central record of recruitment checks is thoroughly maintained and governors keep it under regular review.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Recent improvement actions have focused sharply on developing effective teaching strategies and using assessment skilfully to match learning to pupils' needs. Teaching is now typically good, although inconsistencies remain. For example, teaching is better in mathematics across all classes than it is in English because teachers have greater confidence to assess learning during the lesson and to modify their challenge and support.
- Opportunities for reasoning in mathematics have become integral to lessons and are helping pupils to approach problem-solving with confidence. Nevertheless, the most able pupils are more likely than their classmates to meet interesting problems in their learning activities. Pupils routinely have access to use mathematical apparatus, which helps them to understand the steps that will later lead to more formal calculation strategies.
- Teachers provide pupils with challenging books that develop their reading skills and inspire them to write purposefully and at greater length. Pupils communicate their ideas clearly and with increasing accuracy. However, the prompts that teachers provide in order to develop pupils' accurate use of grammar are not consistently well matched to meet all pupils' needs, particularly where they have fallen behind the average for the class.
- Teachers' secure subject knowledge contributes well to the progress that pupils make. In line with the school's policy, teachers give helpful feedback to pupils, enabling them to build upon their prior learning. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to learning. They provide focused group support, as well as giving pupils helpful advice while they are working. Teaching staff ask pupils pertinent questions that support pupils to think hard. Most pupils can explain what they need to do to improve their work.
- Almost all pupils apply themselves diligently in lessons. They concentrate well and recognise the importance of learning. Year 5 and 6 pupils told inspectors that, since the current headteacher's arrival, the learning environment has become quieter and with fewer disruptions. They now spend more time learning in their lessons than they used

to, which they consider to be good for them. The majority of parents say that they are pleased with their children's progress.

- In lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attention. Pupils respond well and enthusiastically engage in their learning activities. At times, and especially when activities do not provide enough challenge, a few pupils lose focus and do not concentrate well enough on their learning tasks.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Their positive attitudes and response to the interesting lessons that they now enjoy have an impact on pupils' learning and progress. Pupils have rapidly developed the resilience to work harder and for longer periods.
- Pupils have a strong sense of fairness, which is promoted through the curriculum and helps them to consider real-life issues. For example, in an assembly, pupils reflected on life for pupils in their twin school. They considered what it is like to manage in a country where there is limited access to fresh water.
- The school's inclusive nature helps pupils to show respect and tolerance for others, including those who need extra support, such as the pupils in the school's resource provision. Year 6 pupils demonstrated a mature understanding and respect for classmates who have social and emotional needs. Wisely, they recognise that some pupils need more help than others, which they consider to be fair.
- Most pupils take pride in their work but all are proud of their school. They appreciate the different spaces, the attractive environment – both indoor and outdoor – and the resources they have for computing, as well as for sports and play.
- The representative school council has taken an active role to develop the school's values. These are displayed throughout the school and are widely understood and modelled by pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They enjoy attending school, are rarely absent and arrive punctually at the start of the day. During transition times, they move quickly to lessons and are eager to learn.
- Pupils behaved well at all times during the inspection, contributing towards a calm atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils are polite and considerate towards adults and each other. They cooperate well, including at playtimes when pupils in the resource provision mingle well with those from mainstream classes.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are routinely recorded and analysed. Parents, pupils and staff are confident about how they are dealt with. Pupils who present challenge are effectively supported by staff to adapt their behaviour and to learn how to make friends. Staff readily share their expertise with parents through dedicated workshops that focus on managing good behaviour.

- Inspectors observed that where pupils disengage from their learning, this occurs when teaching is not precise enough to meet their needs.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The school's provisional results for 2018 show that pupils' attainment rose in reading, writing and mathematics and, in all subjects, rates of progress are broadly average. Pupils attained good results in reading and just over one third of pupils achieved the higher standard. Attainment in grammar, punctuation and spelling was not as strong as in the other aspects of English. In mathematics, pupils made more progress than in previous years.
- Attainment in mathematics has been variable for a few years, and below reading and writing. Leaders' efforts to improve this subject area have resulted in current pupils making stronger progress in mathematics. Teachers encourage pupils to explain their thinking, which deepens their understanding.
- Pupils are making effective progress in English. They are improving their choice of vocabulary and are increasingly accurate with spelling and grammar. In Year 6, current pupils are learning to write like an author, developing character and plot to interest their reader. Written work that is undertaken outside of the English lessons is not of such a high quality.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those in the resource provision, make good personal, social and academic progress from their starting points. On occasion, pupils are able to participate in lessons, completing similar tasks to the rest of their year group.
- Among the school's disadvantaged pupils there is a high proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The support that this group of pupils receives helps most to make strong progress, although a few who could catch up are not doing so quickly enough.
- Pupils' improving outcomes at the end of Year 6 and their confident attitudes towards learning mean that they are increasingly well prepared for the next stage of their education. Many of them are already positive about the opportunities they will have at secondary school.
- The school's own analysis shows that there is inconsistent attainment across subjects and year groups. Leaders have well-planned actions in place to ensure that pupils who fall behind make more rapid progress. These pupils, including some who are disadvantaged, are not doing as well as other groups, especially in writing, where support is not consistently well adapted.

School details

Unique reference number	115925
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10053011

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Steer
Headteacher	Jilly Myers (executive headteacher)
Telephone number	01730 892292
Website	www.lissjunior.hants.sch.uk
Email address	info@lissjunior.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 December 2016

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school with two classes in each year group.
- In September 2018 it federated with Liss Infant School under one governing body. The federated schools are led by an executive headteacher, who was formerly the headteacher at Liss Junior School.
- Since the last inspection there have been a number of staff changes, creating some turbulence for the school.
- The school has a resource base, which provides 12 places for pupils who have moderate learning difficulties. The school has a much higher proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan than is typical in most primary schools.
- The percentage of pupils who are eligible for SEN support overall is less than in other schools nationally.

- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language or who are from minority ethnic backgrounds is much lower than that found nationally.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The school provides a breakfast club that is run by the governing body.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment in 17 lessons covering a range of subjects. Almost all of the observations were conducted jointly with a senior leader.
- With senior leaders, inspectors looked at pupils' work in subjects across the curriculum.
- Inspectors looked at documentation, including policies, the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation document, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance and behaviour information and safeguarding records.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the assistant headteachers and a mixed group of staff. The lead inspector also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during breaktimes and lunchtimes. They visited the breakfast club and attended an assembly.
- Inspectors met pupils, both formally and informally, to discuss their learning, behaviour and other aspects of school life.
- Inspectors spoke with parents in the playground before school. Inspectors also took account of the 44 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's parental questionnaire, which included 29 free-text comments, and seven responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Linda Jacobs, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Clementina Aina

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