

# Lark Hill Primary School

Northgate Road, Edgeley, Stockport, Cheshire SK3 9PH

## Inspection dates

5 to 6 February 2019

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	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Changes to leadership and staffing have hampered the school's progress since the previous inspection.
- Leaders and governors have worked determinedly to diminish underperformance in teaching. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain.
- Pupils' progress is not consistently good. This is particularly the case in key stage 1.
- Outcomes in writing are weaker than in reading and mathematics. Pupils have insufficient opportunity to develop and apply their writing skills in other subjects.
- At times, teachers' expectations for pupils' attitudes to learning are too low. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently positive.
- Learning is sometimes not matched well enough to pupils' needs, particularly the most able pupils.
- Absence and persistent absence, although improving, remain above national averages.
- The curriculum does not ensure enough emphasis on some subjects or provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop a good understanding of other cultures and beliefs.
- At times, when managing pupils' behaviour, staff do not follow the school's behaviour policy.
- Initiatives to further improve teaching and learning are too recently introduced for their full impact to be evident.
- Many middle leaders are relatively new to post. It is too early to see the impact of their work in promoting improvement.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. Their plans for improvement are well considered and precise.
- Action to improve the teaching of reading has been effective in improving outcomes.
- Children get off to a good start in early years. They make good progress due to effective teaching.
- The school is a safe, caring and happy environment for pupils to learn.

## Full report

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

- Raise the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, particularly in key stage 1, by:
  - ensuring that teaching is more closely matched to pupils' needs
  - ensuring that teaching provides challenge for the most able pupils
  - raising expectations for pupils' attitudes to learning.
- Improve outcomes in writing by:
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their writing skills across the curriculum
  - embedding recent initiatives to improve the teaching of writing
  - ensuring a more consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting across the school.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - developing middle leadership to have more impact on teaching and learning
  - further developing the curriculum to ensure sufficient emphasis on the range of subjects
  - providing more chances for pupils to learn about different cultures and beliefs
  - ensuring that the school's behaviour policy is consistently followed
  - building on the steps already taken to further improve attendance and reduce persistent absence.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced changes to leadership and staffing. This has hampered the school's progress. Since the appointment of the current headteacher, leaders and governors have worked determinedly to address underperformance in teaching. This has led to improvements in teaching, but inconsistencies remain across subjects and year groups. As a result, pupils' progress is not consistently good, and too few pupils reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Leaders and governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas to improve. Action planning is precise and reflects clear and realistic expectations for improvement. Leaders acted quickly to stem the decline in reading progress shown in the 2017 end of key stage 2 results. The effectiveness of their action was reflected in the much improved progress scores in the 2018 provisional results.
- The leadership of teaching has led to improvements in the overall quality of teaching of reading. Leaders have recently introduced initiatives to improve teaching of writing, mathematics and phonics. Although some improvements to current pupils' progress are evident, it is too early to see the full impact of this work in improving pupils' outcomes.
- Staff morale is positive. Those who responded to the staff survey said that they enjoyed working at the school.
- Subject leaders have a good knowledge of their subjects. They have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development in teaching and learning. For example, the leader of history and geography has identified weaknesses in the development of historical skills and a lack of emphasis on geography in the curriculum. Many subject leaders are new to role and so are still becoming established. Therefore, the impact of their work is limited in terms of improvement to the quality of teaching and outcomes.
- Leaders ensure that pupils study a suitably broad range of subjects. Leaders are currently developing the curriculum to ensure that learning is more interesting and engaging for pupils. This work is at an early stage of development, and some subjects, including geography, do not receive enough attention. Pupils have opportunity to engage in extra-curricular activities, such as book club, football, gymnastics and dance.
- The curriculum ensures that pupils learn to be respectful and caring, and to develop positive relationships with others. It provides limited chances for pupils to develop an understanding of other cultures or beliefs.
- Leaders have a good awareness of the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. They make appropriate use of the pupil premium funding to provide additional staffing and staff training to more closely meet pupils' needs. In some year groups, disadvantaged pupils make more progress than others in the school. Over the last year, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved.
- Leaders make effective use of the primary sports premium. Pupils have benefited from the skills of sports coaches to improve their physical skills. Pupils enjoy participating in a range of competitions and sports activities, including karate and rhythmic gymnastics.

- The extra funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is used well. The special educational needs coordinator works closely with parents, carers and outside agencies to make sure that pupils' needs are met. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored. These measures have a positive impact on pupils' progress, with an increasing number of pupils making good progress from their starting points.
- There is a clear behaviour management policy in place. Leaders have not ensured that this is consistently implemented by staff.

### **Governance of the school**

- The membership of the governing body has undergone several changes since the previous inspection. Governors are passionate about improving the school. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas to develop.
- Governors have developed their understanding of their role. They have recently established a strategic monitoring group, with a focus on monitoring leaders' progress in implementing the key priorities in the school improvement plan. This illustrates their commitment to hold leaders to account for improvement.
- Governors provide a good level of support and offer challenge to school leaders. They have been proactive in the process of appointing a new headteacher. Minutes of governing body meetings show that governors ask challenging questions of school leaders.
- Governors are aware of how well funding is used. They keep a close eye on finances to ensure that funding is appropriately spent.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders, staff and governors take their responsibilities for safeguarding seriously. Staff receive regular training and so are knowledgeable about how to recognise signs of neglect or abuse. Staff are proactive in providing support for vulnerable pupils.
- Clear systems are in place to ensure that any referrals are made in a timely way. Close communication with parents and external agencies ensures that timely and effective support is provided for pupils and their families.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. They learn to keep safe, including when online. They know that there are adults to talk to if they have concerns.

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

### **Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching is variable across year groups and subjects. Weaknesses in teaching, particularly in key stage 1, affect pupils' progress and mean that not enough pupils reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectation for pupils' attitudes to learning. As a result, pupils are, at times, not challenged to do their best and apply themselves diligently to their learning.
- At times, learning is not closely matched to pupils' skills and abilities and does not

provide enough challenge, particularly for the most able pupils. This means that learning for these pupils is not consistently deepened and extended.

- The teaching of writing, although improving, is not consistently good. Pupils learn to write for a range of purposes. However, they have limited chances to apply and extend their writing skills by, for example, writing at length across the curriculum. The quality of pupils' handwriting is variable.
- The teaching of mathematics varies. In general, adults are skilled at modelling strategies for working out problems. For example, teachers' modelling of multiplication and division strategies helped pupils in key stage 2 to use the right strategies to approach their mathematical problems. Explanations are often clear and, at times questioning is used well to encourage pupils to think and explain their reasoning. However, as with other subjects, learning sometimes lacks challenge and is not closely matched to pupils' skills and abilities.
- The teaching of reading has improved and is resulting in better and more consistent progress for pupils. Staff are more skilled in promoting a love of reading. The more systematic approach to teaching reading skills, including phonics, is bearing fruit. Pupils show a clear enjoyment of reading, and fluency is improving.
- The teaching of pupils who have SEND generally supports their needs well. Pupils are usually well- supported by teachers and teaching assistants, who have a close knowledge of their skills and capabilities. This means that an increasing number of pupils are making good progress from their varied starting points.
- Staff establish positive relationships with pupils. This helps to promote pupils' confidence and contributes to their readiness to learn.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are not consistently positive. This means that, at times they do not apply themselves fully to their learning, and their appreciation of the value of learning is not fully developed.
- Staff have a caring approach. They work well with the leadership team to meet the needs of the many pupils in the school whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Where pupils need support, this is given quickly. As a result, relationships between staff and pupils are strong and pupils feel safe.
- Pupils say that they enjoy school. They report that bullying happens sometimes, but that staff are good at resolving it. Pupils learn about how to stay safe, including online safety. Pupils know that they should not share their details with others when online.
- Through activities such as school assemblies, pupils learn about the school's values, which include being respectful, responsible and open to challenge. This helps to promote positive attitudes towards others and self-confidence. Pupils show respect for one another's views. However, they have a limited understanding of cultures or beliefs

other than their own.

- Pupils enjoy their roles and responsibilities, such as membership of the school council, or as playground buddies helping younger children. These roles contribute positively to their personal development.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour in class is inconsistent. Often, pupils' conduct is good, and they engage well in their learning. However, where staff expectations for pupils are not high enough, and where learning is not closely matched to their needs, pupils do not engage well with their learning. Pupils are then inattentive and distracted from their learning. On occasion, noise levels distract pupils from their learning.
- There are a small number of pupils who display challenging behaviour. Staff are aware of pupils' needs and have a positive approach to managing this behaviour. This often results in improvement to pupils' behaviour over time. However, their approach is inconsistent and does not always follow the school's behaviour policy. Therefore, changes to behaviour are, at times, not achieved. This means that, on some occasions, pupils' challenging behaviour can affect their own and others' learning.
- At breaktimes, pupils cooperate and play happily together. Similarly, in the dining hall pupils socialise well while eating. Pupils move around school sensibly.
- Attendance, while improving, remains below the national average. Leaders and staff place high importance on raising attendance further and reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent. This work is starting to have a positive impact, and attendance is improving. Despite this improvement, attendance remains below the national average. Persistent absence is, in part, due to a number of pupils with medical conditions which affect their attendance. Staff work closely with individual families to bring about improvements.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 have varied historically. In 2018, progress in reading, writing and mathematics was average. The proportions of pupils reaching the expected standard were below national averages, apart from in reading, which was in line with average.
- Evidence from pupils' books and the school's information shows that the progress of pupils in key stage 2 is not consistently good across year groups and subjects. Current pupils make stronger progress in reading than in writing or mathematics. Pupils are developing a love of reading and a deeper understanding of texts.
- Outcomes at the end of key stage 1 have been below national averages for the last three years. However, they are showing steady improvement. Current pupils' progress shows improvement, particularly in reading. Pupils say that they enjoy reading and are becoming more confident in applying their phonics knowledge to read unfamiliar words. Progress in writing and mathematics is not as strong as it is in reading.
- Disadvantaged pupils make progress that is similar to, and sometimes better than,

other pupils in the school. In 2018, the difference in progress and attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally in reading diminished.

- The progress of pupils with SEND is improving. Due to effective support from teachers and teaching assistants, and close assessment of their needs, more pupils are making good progress than before.
- The progress of the most able pupils requires improvement. Few pupils left Lark Hill in 2018 working at greater depth or attaining the higher standards, although there was an improvement in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher standard in reading from the previous year. At key stage 1, no pupils attained greater depth in reading, writing or mathematics.
- In recent years, the proportion of pupils who have met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has been below national averages. Leaders' initiatives to improve phonics teaching are beginning to show improvement to progress for current pupils.
- Pupils cover a range of topics in subjects such as science, history and geography. However, at times, learning in these subjects lacks depth and does not effectively develop pupils' subject-specific skills. Leaders' work to ensure a more balanced emphasis on some subjects is in its early stages.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- Children enter Reception class with skill levels that are below those typical for their age. This is particularly the case for their communication skills. Due to good-quality teaching, pupils make good progress. Children who enter school with limited communication skills make the good progress needed to catch up. As a result, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception Year is improving and is closer to the national average. Most children are well prepared for the transfer to Year 1.
- Leadership of the early years is effective. The leader has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of provision. Improvements since the last inspection to the outdoor provision have ensured that children have a good-quality learning environment both inside and out in which to play and learn.
- Children's skills are accurately assessed when they start school. Their progress is carefully and effectively monitored to make sure that children are making consistently good progress. Where children may be lagging behind, support is put in place to ensure that they catch up. This ensures that children make good progress and that any differences in achievement diminish. In 2018, a greater proportion of disadvantaged children attained a good level of development than other children in the class.
- Children engage well in the activities provided and show positive attitudes to their learning. They listened attentively to adults during a phonics session and enthusiastically suggested their ideas and responded to questions.
- Teaching is effective. Adults use effective questioning to promote children's thinking skills and deepen their understanding. For example, children were asked to 'show me something longer' to clarify their understanding of this concept.
- Adults provided an interesting range of activities to develop learning. For example, children enjoyed making 'wanted' posters for an imaginary thief who 'stole' something

from their classroom.

- Children behave well. They are familiar with routines and show a strong sense of security in the warm and caring environment provided. They learn to take turns and show positive relationships with each other.
- Staff establish positive relationships with parents. Parents are encouraged to contribute to assessments of their children's learning through, for example, sharing 'wow' moments from home. They are encouraged to support their children's learning at home.
- Staff are vigilant to keep children safe. They ensure that the statutory welfare requirements are met.



## School details

Unique reference number	106056
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10082069

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gareth Jones
Headteacher	Stuart Kelly
Telephone number	0161 480 6295
Website	<a href="http://www.larkhill-pri.stockport.sch.uk">www.larkhill-pri.stockport.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:headteacher@larkhill-pri.stockport.sch.uk">headteacher@larkhill-pri.stockport.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	4 to 5 February 2015

## Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average. The proportion of pupils who have statements of special educational needs, or education, health and care plans is above average.
- The school operates a breakfast club for its pupils.
- There have been a number of changes to staffing and senior leadership since the last inspection. The current headteacher took up post in April 2017, following the retirement of the previous postholder.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning throughout the school. Five observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors scrutinised pupils' workbooks and listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the chair of the governing body and five other governors, the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector also held a meeting with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of information produced by the school, including information on pupils' progress and attainment, behaviour and attendance, procedures for safeguarding and the school's own evaluation of its work. They considered reports to the governing body, minutes of their meetings and the school's plans for further improvement.
- Inspectors considered the 10 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the views of nine parents who communicated via text message to Ofsted.
- Inspectors also took account of the 16 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 21 responses to the pupils' questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Elaine White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Christine Howard

Ofsted Inspector

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