

Little Heath Primary School

School Road, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 1JW

Inspection dates

12–13 March 2019

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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have taken decisive action to tackle the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Their actions are ensuring that current pupils are making good progress across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics.
- Leaders and governors work together effectively. They have established a strong vision and are determined that pupils achieve well.
- Pupils make good progress across the school. In 2018, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standards at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics (combined) was above the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make strong gains in their learning from their different starting points.
- Improvements in the teaching of mathematics are enabling current pupils to make strong progress.
- Leaders provide a broad and interesting curriculum. Teachers plan activities that engage and excite pupils. Science, art and sporting opportunities are particularly well catered for, ensuring that pupils make good progress in these subjects.
- The foundation unit promotes children's early years development well. Leaders provide rich learning experiences that ensure that children make a good start to their education.
- Teachers ask probing questions to check pupils' understanding and address their misconceptions.
- Leaders ensure that there is a strong nurturing environment. This means that pupils' welfare is promoted effectively and that they are safe and happy at school.
- Teachers sometimes do not provide tasks that challenge the most able pupils sufficiently.
- While leaders check and provide feedback to staff on the quality of their teaching, they do not always follow up on learning points to ensure that teachers' practice is as strong as it can be.
- Where the teaching of phonics is weaker, not all pupils apply their knowledge and skills accurately.
- Some middle leaders do not fully evaluate the impact of teaching upon pupils' outcomes across the curriculum.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of how pupils should apply their writing skills in subjects across the curriculum.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management of the school by:
 - further developing the monitoring and evaluative skills of middle leaders so that they fully understand the impact of teaching on learning in the subjects for which they are responsible
 - leaders making effective use of their monitoring so that the quality of teaching is as good as the strongest practice.
- Improve the consistency of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, so raising pupils' outcomes, by ensuring that:
 - the most able pupils are challenged and think hard about their learning
 - phonics is taught correctly and effectively
 - pupils apply their writing skills across all subjects so that their handwriting is neat and they spell words correctly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have ensured that weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been tackled quickly. The headteacher is resolute in her commitment to bring about school improvement. After a period of staffing change, a united team has been established, ensuring that staff morale has improved.
- Leaders carefully consider new approaches that they introduce into the school. Staff are consulted about new developments so that they are clear about the purpose and intended outcome of any new proposals. Consequently, new approaches are established quickly and used effectively in teaching. As one staff member commented, 'Any new policies are always addressed with all staff to take into account our views.'
- Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and areas for development. The school improvement plan identifies appropriate actions and evaluates the difference these make to the outcomes of pupils.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Strengths and learning points are identified, and these are fed back to the teachers. However, some leaders do not ensure that teachers make good use of the guidance so that their practice is as good as it can be.
- Leaders make good use of funding for pupils with SEND. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) uses her knowledge well to ensure that teaching is targeted well. The SENCo provides teachers with support about how to adjust their plans to meet the needs of pupils with SEND within their class. Well-trained teaching assistants skilfully deliver carefully selected programmes for pupils with SEND. Leaders ensure that pupils with complex needs make good progress towards their personalised targets. The SENCo's strong leadership means that pupils with SEND make strong gains from their starting points.
- Leaders have carried out a thorough analysis of the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders make use of current research and best practice to ensure that the additional funding is spent effectively. Targeted support is provided for pupils' emotional and academic needs. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' progress is good, and differences between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally are rapidly diminishing.
- Leaders make good use of the physical education (PE) and sport premium to engage pupils in a range of sporting activities to improve their physical health. Leaders place a high priority upon participation, and the school's display of trophies is testament to their success in many different sports. The additional funding provides equipment for pupils to use at lunchtimes. For example, the gym trail and large apparatus help pupils to be active during the school day.
- Following the previous inspection, leaders introduced new approaches to ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced. The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. Themed weeks are also used to deepen pupils' knowledge and skills. Pupils told the inspectors that a focus on art has given them the opportunity to study the work of different artists and create

works using their styles. Finished canvases displayed around the school demonstrate the range of techniques used by pupils to create their works of art.

- The curriculum promotes pupils' social, moral and cultural development well. Pupils are taught about differences through assemblies and as part of the curriculum. They learn about different faiths and cultures, especially those that are reflected in their diverse local community. One pupil who spoke to the inspectors said, 'Everyone is different, but we are all equal.'
- Leaders ensure that pupils develop a sense of responsibility through the jobs and opportunities provided by the school. Friendship groups encourage pupils' collaborative skills. Pupils are given topics to discuss and make decisions about the ways in which the school can be improved. Pupils act as leaders of teams or as representatives on the school council, providing a good grounding in democratic processes and debate. In these ways, pupils understand important British values and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Some middle leaders are new to their roles. They are involved in checking that the new approaches to delivering the curriculum are providing pupils with opportunities to study a range of subjects. However, not all leaders are aware of the impact the curriculum is having upon pupils' outcomes. This is because they have not fully evaluated how well their subjects are taught.
- Leaders make effective use of professional training to support teachers' development. There are opportunities for teachers to reflect on their practice and request specific support to help them improve. For example, the newly qualified teachers consider that the support they receive contributes well to developing their practice.
- The support given by the local authority has been used effectively. Leaders make good use of subject experts to develop the skills of teachers. For example, the support for improving mathematics has ensured a consistent approach across the school. This means that current pupils are making good progress in mathematics.
- In the recent past, a few parents and carers expressed concerns about how well the school is led and managed. Leaders, including governors, have introduced increased communication through weekly blogs and regular newsletters. The headteacher also completes a weekly blog to update parents about school events. Leaders ensure that they are available to readily respond to any parental concerns. Parents who spoke with inspectors informally said that they had no concerns with the information they receive from the school. A typical comment on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, stated: 'It's particularly welcoming to see the headteacher standing at the school gates most mornings to welcome her pupils to school and to say good morning. She is also there because she makes herself available to parents who wish to have a word with her.'

Governance of the school

- Governors work well with leaders and have reviewed their practice to support school improvement. Governors ensure that they use their skills well to fulfil their legal duties. They undertake training so that they have a good understanding of how to challenge leaders. For example, they have improved their knowledge about how to use school data so that they can monitor the information about pupils' progress closely.

- Governors make frequent visits to the school, talk to pupils and staff and check whether actions agreed with leaders have been carried out. As a result, they have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school as well as the areas for improvement. Governors use their knowledge to ask challenging questions and hold leaders to account. This means that they understand whether new initiatives are making a difference to improving pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that the school's policies and procedures for keeping pupils safe are up to date and implemented consistently. There is a well-planned regular cycle of training. It provides staff with the knowledge and understanding about how to recognise any signs that children may be vulnerable. Staff are kept informed about any new guidance and updated about safeguarding matters on a regular basis.
- The school's systems for recording concerns are thorough and enable leaders to analyse any issues that may have been raised about pupils' welfare. Leaders make a detailed recording of actions agreed with external agencies. Checks are made to ensure that these have been carried out to support vulnerable pupils and their families.
- The school records for checking the suitability of those who are employed to work with children meet the government's requirements.
- Strong relationships underpin the school's nurturing ethos. An overwhelming majority of parents agree that leaders care for pupils' well-being and ensure that they are safe. A comment similar to others made on Parent View said, 'It is a fantastic school where the teachers really care about the pupils' development and well-being.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The positive relationships between adults and pupils promote good attitudes to learning. They are built upon a respectful understanding that builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem. This means that pupils respond quickly to adults' direction, ensuring that time is used well for learning. Pupils enjoy the support that teachers provide and the encouragement they receive. Pupils sustain their concentration so that they make good progress. One pupil told inspectors, 'Teachers help you and give us ideas that help with our work.'
- Teachers plan interesting lessons that actively engage pupils in their learning. They set work that builds on pupils' existing knowledge. For example, younger pupils were able to provide reasons why the Great Fire of London spread quickly and caused widespread damage. However, some teachers do not plan tasks that consistently challenge the most able pupils. The activities they complete are similar to those provided for other pupils. In these instances, the learning for the most able pupils does not extend their thinking.
- Teachers question pupils effectively to ascertain how far they have understood new ideas. Teachers probe pupils' responses so that they think about their learning and secure their understanding. Where they identify misconceptions, teachers are quick to provide further explanations so that progress is sustained.

- The teaching of mathematics is effective. Work in pupils' books shows that there is a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics. Teachers make good use of the school's new approaches to develop pupils' understanding through reasoning. For example, teachers provide tasks that require pupils to show their understanding of mathematical ideas in different ways. Pupils apply their knowledge to regular problem-solving activities. They explain and justify their answers using appropriate mathematical language. This means that current pupils are making strong progress.
- Teachers ensure that pupils write for different purposes and across the curriculum. Teachers plan a sequence of tasks that build pupils' understanding of the important features of a genre. Pupils make use of editing and redrafting to improve their choice of language and correct their spelling. However, pupils' writing skills are not used consistently well when writing in subjects other than English. Teachers do not insist on the same high expectations for how pupils should present their work and spell words correctly.
- Teachers make use of a variety of texts across the curriculum to encourage pupils' reading. Pupils use the school library regularly, where there are a wide selection of books and texts to choose from. Consistently good teaching of reading develops pupils' use of inference and develops their comprehension skills well.
- The teaching of phonics, however, is inconsistent. Initially, children make a good start with their early reading development. The books are well matched to support their use of phonics to read unfamiliar words. However, not all pupils are taught the correct sound that each letter makes. This means that they are not able to use their phonics accurately when they read, especially those who struggle with their reading. This weakens the progress these pupils make.
- Science is taught well across the school. Pupils are encouraged to be inquisitive and ask questions when conducting investigations. Pupils' written work shows that they are developing a good understanding of scientific enquiry supported with fundamental knowledge and facts.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school has a caring and nurturing atmosphere. Leaders place a high priority on supporting pupils' welfare and happiness. Special areas such as a sensory room provide a calming space should pupils become upset or distressed. Pupils are taught about mindfulness through assemblies. This helps them to recognise and reflect upon their own emotional well-being.
- Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning. Adults encourage pupils to 'have a go' and give time to consider their responses before answering questions. Pupils make independent choices about the resources they need to support their learning. These approaches make a good contribution to developing pupils' independence and resilience. As one pupil, commenting about her learning, told inspectors, 'We are not scared to make mistakes.'

- Pupils' social responsibility is developed through opportunities for the 'pupil voice' to be heard. Friendship groups provide forums where pupils across the school meet to discuss school issues. Leaders consider the views of pupils, which inform how the school can be made better. Pupils recognise that the groups provide a good opportunity to get to know other pupils from across the school. This helps to create a harmonious school community.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy. Fruit is available for any pupil to select for their playtime snack. They are taught about healthy lifestyles and keeping fit. Pupils enjoy using the outdoor equipment at lunchtimes and participate in a variety of sports.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and the different forms it can take. They understand about how to respond if they have concerns when using the internet. Pupils are clear that they would never give out personal information when using devices. Pupils consider that if they shared their concerns, then adults would act quickly to resolve any issues.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils understand the systems for ensuring that they behave well in school. These approaches are consistently used by adults so that the environment is calm and orderly. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They listen attentively to teachers and speak to school visitors respectfully.
- Leaders maintain a careful check on pupils' behaviour and evaluate their information to look for any patterns or trends. The well-organised system of recording ensures that leaders respond quickly to concerns so that good levels of behaviour are sustained.
- In the last school year, the attendance rate dipped below the national average. Leaders make effective use of their analysis of attendance records to identify any concerns. Clear systems are in place to communicate and work with parents. Consequently, current rates of attendance are improving.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2018, the proportion of pupils in Year 6 attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics (combined) was above the national average. The proportions of pupils reaching the higher standard in reading and/or greater depth in writing were also above the national averages.
- Over time, the progress made by pupils in mathematics has been lower when compared to reading and writing. Leaders' new approaches are working well. Pupils are developing a greater confidence in using and applying their mathematical knowledge to solving problems. This is ensuring that pupils have a secure understanding of concepts and are making strong progress in their learning.
- Pupils read with fluency and expression. They discuss the reasons for their reading choices and demonstrate good levels of comprehension. Pupils' enjoyment of reading is promoted through the range of books across the school and well-designed reading corners in classrooms.

- Pupils write for different purposes and audiences. They are developing their use of language, which is often supported through a high-quality text linked to the subjects they study. Pupils use their writing skills creatively across the curriculum. For example, pupils wrote a radio report about living in a volcanic region, while recording important geographical information and terms. However, progress is limited where pupils do not ensure that they spell words correctly and write neatly.
- In 2018, the proportion of Year 1 pupils who attained the expected standard in the phonics screening check was above the national average. However, pupils' current progress in phonics is weaker, especially for the lower-ability pupils. This is because they do not have a secure understanding of the sounds that letters make. This means that they are not able to read words successfully.
- Teachers adapt their plans well to meet the needs of pupils with SEND in their class. The intervention support is of high quality. Pupils with SEND make strong progress.
- A well-planned strategy provides good support for disadvantaged pupils. Their needs are considered and their progress monitored closely by school leaders. Consequently, they achieve well from their different starting points.
- The most able pupils are not always challenged to think hard about their learning across a range of subjects. This hinders their progress.
- Pupils make good progress across the curriculum. The curriculum caters well for developing pupils' creative, scientific and technical skills. Themed weeks are effective because they make use of specialists to improve pupils' progress further. This ensures that they are well prepared for the next stages of their education.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision works as a foundation unit. This means that both Nursery and Reception children work and play together. Key workers are linked to groups of children to ensure that their individual needs are met through teaching and the curriculum.
- Children start the early years provision with skills that are typical for their age. They make good progress so that an increasing number of children attain a good level of development and/or exceed the early learning goals by the time they leave the Reception Year. This ensures that they are well prepared for key stage 1.
- Effective leadership provides a strong vision for the learning experiences children should access as they work through the unit. This vision builds on children's interests and experiences to develop purposeful learning opportunities. The leader and her team know the children well and design the curriculum to meet their needs effectively in all areas of learning.
- The indoor and outdoor learning environments promote children's curiosity and interests. They are well planned and provide a solid foundation for learning. For example, as children created a salad for insects, they discussed the smell and texture of the herbs and leaves. When they finished, they took the salad outside to the bug hotel they had created and could discuss the different types of insects they might attract with the food.

- Routines are clearly established, ensuring that children settle quickly in the mornings. Children are friendly and confident. They play and work together well whether they are of Reception or Nursery age. This helps to promote their collaborative skills. For example, a Nursery child made use of 'story stones' to retell the tale of 'The Hungry Caterpillar'. A Reception child helped her by recording the story on paper, which developed her own early writing skills.
- Early writing is promoted effectively. Children make titles and instructions for all their role play areas. They are encouraged to write as part of their chosen independent activities. They make use of their phonics to write words and form letters correctly. For example, the outdoor mud kitchen has examples of children's labels for utensils as well as suggested recipes.
- Adults support children effectively by asking questions that encourage them in their learning. They make careful assessment of what children understand and support their development through sensitive intervention. For example, while children were on their imaginary train trip, an adult prompted a child to think about how much the journey cost and whether he could count out that amount.
- Teachers and adults ensure that records of learning are available for parents. Parents are encouraged to share these records with their children. They are encouraged to make any further contributions to provide a wider understanding of their child's development to ensure that their child's needs are fully met. Parents value the start children get in the early years and the strong communication between home and school.
- The legal requirements for children's welfare and safeguarding are met. Children are well looked after and have positive relationships with the adults who support them.

School details

Unique reference number	117567
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10054380

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Asha Chandegra
Headteacher	Kim Custis
Telephone number	01707 652104
Website	www.littleheath.herts.sch.uk/
Email address	head@littleheath.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 March 2018

Information about this school

- Little Heath Primary School is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported with an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school has breakfast and after-school clubs that are run by external providers on the school site.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across the school in a range of subjects. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised the quality of pupils' work in all classes and undertook additional scrutiny of work in pupils' books. Inspectors spoke to pupils and listened to some key stage 1 pupils read. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally in the classroom as well as meeting with a group of pupils from across the school.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, members of the local governing body and the school's chosen improvement partner. Inspectors also met with the SENCo, who is also the leader of the pupil premium, the early years leader, a selection of subject leaders and two newly qualified teachers.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to attendance and behaviour, school improvement planning, assessment information, monitoring of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings and school documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they arrived in the morning and when they collected their children from school. Inspectors considered 75 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 44 free-text comments. Inspectors also considered 23 responses made to the online staff survey and 36 responses to the online pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Victoria Penty

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