

Limespring School

Park House, 16 High Road, East Finchley, London N2 9PJ

Inspection dates

26–28 March 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	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leadership requires improvement. Leaders' actions have not secured good teaching or good outcomes for pupils at the school.
- Many staff and leaders are new to their roles, and it is too early to measure their impact on securing improvements.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are variable. Some pupils do not receive demanding work to deepen their thinking.
- Leaders have not provided enough opportunities for pupils to develop strong skills and knowledge across the curriculum, such as in science and humanities.
- The system for checking pupils' progress is new and not fully developed. Other than in English and mathematics, staff do not have a secure understanding of pupils' starting points and, thus, their progress over time.
- Attendance levels are too low for some pupils. This affects their learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have implemented procedures to ensure that the school is compliant with the independent school standards.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are polite, and conduct themselves well during their lessons and around the school.
- The provision to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The caring ethos of the school ensures that pupils are well looked after.
- Safeguarding receives high priority, and is effective.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to raise pupils' outcomes by:
 - ensuring that teachers use pupils' assessment information effectively to plan and inform teaching, so that pupils make good or better progress
 - setting work to match the needs and abilities of pupils so that they are able to deepen their knowledge and acquire strong skills in a wide range of subjects.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - continuing to develop the curriculum so that it has clear goals to meet pupils' needs in a wide range of subjects, including in science and humanities
 - accurately identifying pupils' starting points in all subjects
 - ensuring that the recently introduced system for checking, monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress is fully implemented across all subjects
 - continuing to provide appropriate staff training and checks on staff's performance to ensure that these have a positive impact on teaching, learning and pupils' outcomes.
- Improve the attendance of all pupils, so that it is in line with the national average.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not successfully addressed all the issues raised from the previous inspection. Suitable plans are in place, but leadership and staff changes have not secured improvements swiftly. Recent actions to improve the school have not had sufficiently strong impact on pupils' learning and their outcomes.
- The school's system for tracking pupils' progress is not fully implemented. Staff are unable to check pupils' progress quickly and efficiently. This limits pupils' performance across the curriculum.
- Aspects of the school's curriculum do not promote good learning. The curriculum coverage in some subjects, such as science and humanities, is not fully in place to suit pupils' needs and abilities. Despite a central learning theme, which promotes the study of different subjects, pupils do not develop a broad range of knowledge and skills. The curriculum helps most pupils to read, write and practise basic numeracy.
- Procedures for managing staff performance are developing, but are a recent initiative. Leaders have reorganised the school's staffing structure with clear plans to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment at the school. However, other important issues have not been addressed as swiftly.
- Staff value the specialist training they receive to develop their teaching. They use the information and ideas for teaching to enhance pupils' learning. This has not had time to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to good across the school.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. The school's guiding rules, 'The Limespring Way', which state, 'We try our best, we listen to others, we are respectful and kind, and we are safe and sensible', promote this well. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including trips to museums and art galleries, which support pupils' learning experiences. Pupils are prepared positively for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have ensured that the school is compliant with the independent school standards.

The governance of the school

- The advisory body has provided support to school leaders since the last inspection.
- The advisory body draws upon members' expertise, including in special education, to provide support to the school's leaders.
- The proprietors have not ensured that there is a suitable body to hold leaders sufficiently to account for the education pupils receive.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that safeguarding continues to be a high priority for the school. The safeguarding policy, which is published on the school's website, takes into account current government requirements.

- Leaders undertake rigorous checks to ensure that adults are suitable to work with children. Staff are appropriately trained, and they are aware of current issues including peer-on-peer abuse and county lines. All staff know how to identify and report signs of a child at possible risk, including of radicalisation and extremism.
- Leaders work closely with external agencies and parents and carers to make sure that pupils receive support, should they need it. There is system in place to check pupils' absence. Written records are carefully maintained to monitor the help that pupils receive.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement across the curriculum. Recent improvements to teaching have not been quick enough to make a substantial difference to pupils' learning and progress in all subjects.
- Weaknesses in assessment practices mean that teachers have limited information on how well pupils learn across the curriculum. This restricts teachers' planning to help pupils make gains in their knowledge and understanding.
- A newly introduced system for checking pupils' progress is not fully implemented. Nonetheless, this is starting to generate information on how well pupils learn, in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils are not appropriately challenged in their learning. Teaching does not routinely take into account pupils' starting points in order to deepen pupils' thinking. For instance, teaching helps pupils to develop their basic numeracy skills, but some pupils are unable to apply those skills to solve mathematical problems.
- There are some indications that teaching is improving. Recent staff changes at the start of this academic year and an increased proportion of qualified teachers at the school are helping to improve pupils' learning in English and mathematics.
- Some teaching, such as in art, literacy and physical education, helps pupils develop appropriate skills. This is because teachers plan well to help pupils learn. Teachers take account of pupils' needs and interests when they design activities to motivate them to learn. Some teachers check pupils' understanding during learning, and adapt their teaching appropriately.
- Pupils said that their teachers' caring attitudes help them to regain their enjoyment of learning and being at school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Parents value the way the school cares for their children and recognise the strides they make in their personal development.
- Pupils develop positive attitudes and respond well to their responsibilities, which they take seriously. For instance, the school council, along with leaders, decided upon 'The Limespring Way', which defines the school's rules. Pupils value the praise, rewards and

encouragement that their efforts receive.

- Leaders and teachers ensure that pupils' physical and emotional needs are effectively met. Therapists work with assigned pupils to deliver programmes and set targets, which are tailored for individual pupils. Pupils learn to stay healthy by eating well and taking exercise. For example, pupils engaged readily in a specialist sporting activity arranged by the school. This builds pupils' self-esteem and helps them to have confidence in themselves, and in what they can do.
- Pupils understand safety matters, such as e-safety. They have a good understanding of risks associated with a range of situations, including different forms of bullying. Pupils were adamant that bullying is rare at the school, and said that they feel safe at this school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are courteous, welcoming to visitors and show respect for each other's ideas and views. Pupils behave well during lessons and show positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Most pupils like being at school, and they conduct themselves well during social times. The school provides recreational equipment, including construction toys for pupils to use during breaktime and they play enthusiastically together. Pupils particularly enjoy visits to the local park, where they can explore, play on the swings or participate in sport in the open spaces.
- Attendance is low. The school's records show that most pupils are punctual, and some pupils attend school regularly, but not all. The proportion of pupils who are absent is much higher than the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes across the curriculum require improvement. Leaders and teachers do not know pupils' starting points or the progress they make in some subjects, such as science and humanities. This was an area for improvement at the time of the last inspection.
- Pupils are not making consistently good progress in some subjects. Scrutiny of pupils' work, including written work in books, showed that pupils make limited progress, including in science. Progress in mathematics is variable. Pupils make strong progress in basic numeracy because teaching encourages pupils to practise their basic skills, but pupils' development of deeper mathematical knowledge is not as effective.
- Most pupils make better progress in reading and writing than in other subjects. Teaching typically uses every opportunity for pupils to practise their reading and develop their writing, and pupils read a selection of interesting texts. Pupils develop their confidence in reading and learn to check spellings and punctuation because they are encouraged to read aloud to their peers during lessons, and to check through their written work.
- Over time, pupils make strong gains in their artistic skills. This is because art teaching is well planned to meet pupils' needs and is rekindling their incentive to engage in learning.
- Generally, pupils are prepared for the next stage of their education, because the school has boosted their confidence to learn. Almost all go on to the secondary school of their

choice.

School details

Unique reference number	137890
DfE registration number	302/6003
Inspection number	10092515

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Denise Drinkwater and Nick Jones
Headteacher	Denise Drinkwater
Annual fees (day pupils)	£23,100
Telephone number	020 8444 1387
Website	www.limespringschool.co.uk
Email address	info@limespringschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–22 September 2017

Information about this school

- Limespring School is an independent special day school for pupils who have specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia. Most pupils also have other complex special educational, social and emotional needs.
- The school provides additional tuition for pupils who are enrolled at other schools. This provision was not part of this inspection.
- The school's last inspection was a full standard inspection in September 2017, when its overall effectiveness was judged to be requires improvement.
- Since the last inspection, there have been various changes to the school's staff, including to the senior leadership team.

- The school's ethos, 'children in Limespring School will engage, emerge and shine', expresses the school's purpose. The school's stated aim is to provide a safe place where pupils develop the self-belief that they can achieve.
- The previous inspection reported that a new governing body was due to replace the advisory board. However, this has not occurred. The school's advisory board is now called the advisory body.

Information about this inspection

- Visits were made to lessons to observe learning and scrutinise pupils' work in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and art. A few of these visits were made jointly with the principal.
- A range of documents, including attendance records, assessment information and safeguarding procedures, were scrutinised. A tour of the premises was made to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- Meetings were held with the proprietors, one of which is the headteacher, members of the advisory body, deputy headteacher and teachers. Discussions were held with a parent and with pupils, both formally and during learning and social times.
- The 11 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and eight text responses were considered. The views of five staff who completed the staff questionnaire were examined. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Rosemarie McCarthy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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