

Inspection of a good school: Leavesden JMI School

High Road, Leavesden, Watford, Hertfordshire WD25 7QZ

Inspection dates:

19–20 November 2019

Outcome

Leavesden JMI School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are well-mannered and polite. They are calm and orderly when they walk around the building. Pupils make good use of play equipment and readily share games and activities. Pupils generally behave well in class. However, on a few occasions, there is some chatting while the teacher talks. Not all teachers insist that pupils listen and pay attention.

The headteacher has made new appointments to senior leadership roles. Together, senior leaders are setting high expectations for pupils' achievement. In recent years, standards have been too low. There have been a lot of staff changes. This has affected how well pupils have achieved. The new approaches leaders have introduced are at their early stages. They are not used consistently well by all teachers across the school.

Pupils feel safe in school. They told me that Leavesden Junior and Mixed Infant School is a friendly place. Pupils understand about the different forms bullying can take. They told me it was rare in their school. Pupils were confident that if it did happen, adults would support them to resolve any concerns.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

New senior leaders have made a good start. They have accurately identified what needs to improve and made some changes. It is too early to see of the difference that these changes are making. Teaching is not consistently strong across the school. Some teachers do not understand how to deliver leaders' plans for the curriculum well.

Standards in reading are too low, especially at the end of key stage 1. Not all teachers are experts in teaching phonics. They do not check that pupils blend sounds accurately. Books do not challenge the most able readers. Pupils who struggle with reading do not have enough opportunities to practise their skills. This hampers their fluency and confidence.

The mathematics curriculum is now addressing gaps in pupils' learning. Teachers organise learning that builds on what pupils already know. For example, pupils in Year 6 discussed how their work on finding percentages starts with knowing table facts and fractions. Teachers address gaps in pupils' knowledge through additional teaching sessions. This is particularly effective for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND are starting to catch up with their peers.

Leaders are currently developing the curriculum for all subjects. In history and geography, topics are carefully planned. They build pupils' understanding of key concepts. For example, pupils learn about inspirational figures such as Ernest Shackleton. They make connections in their learning through ideas of travel, exploration and polar regions. There is still more work to do. Plans for other foundation subjects do not show the order in which pupils learn about different things. Not all teachers address pupils' misconceptions. Many of these subjects do not have any leaders. Senior leaders do not know whether these subjects are taught effectively.

Disadvantaged pupils have not achieved well over time. Leaders' strategies have not paid close enough attention to the needs of disadvantaged pupils. This has changed. New leaders' plans are well targeted and beginning to show some success. For example, pupils' attendance is improving owing to regular meetings with parents and carers and the tracking of attendance. However, it remains too early to see how well disadvantaged pupils are making progress across the curriculum.

In the early years, children are happy and safe. I saw children mixing well with one another and with adults. Leaders plan activities that address all areas of children's development. For example, themes from a book support children's counting, speaking and social skills.

However, some adults do not use all activities as well as they are intended. Where teaching is less effective, the purpose of learning is not clear. Children do not sustain their concentration and flit between activities. The learning environment does not provide enough challenge for children's curiosity or thinking.

Pupils enjoy a range of trips and activities. They speak enthusiastically about visits that link to the things they are learning. For example, pupils visited London to see where the 'Great Fire' had started. Pupils recall the school's umbrella values. They provide examples of where they have shown respect, courage and determination during their time at school. This helps to support the inclusive nature of the school.

Governors understand the weaknesses of the school. They are working with the local authority to help the school improve. Governors visit the school to check that the information they receive from leaders is accurate.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that there is a rigorous approach to keeping pupils safe. Staff receive regular training to check their understanding of safeguarding systems and policies. Adults know how to recognise the signs and report that pupils may be at risk of harm. The school's family worker provides effective support for families. Leaders work with external agencies to ensure that pupils are offered the help they need.

The records for checking the suitability of staff and those that visit the school are well maintained. They are regularly checked to ensure that they are up to date.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum plans for most foundation subjects have not been developed. Subject leadership is at an early stage of implementation. Teachers do not know what pupils need to learn at key points and stages. Leaders do not know how well pupils are developing their knowledge in different subjects. This means that pupils are not achieving as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all subject plans include well-ordered content. They need to ensure that teachers understand how to plan lessons in a logical sequence and that curriculum leaders are well trained.
- Some teachers do not understand how to implement leaders' plans effectively. Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not check what pupils have learned or address misconceptions. This leads to gaps in pupils' understanding and knowledge. Leaders must provide training and support so that teaching is consistently strong across the school, including the early years.
- Not all teachers understand how to teach phonics well. Some pupils do not have books that challenge their reading abilities. Those that struggle to read do not practise regularly. Pupils do not achieve well in their reading at key stage 1. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers are experts in teaching phonics and pupils read accurately and fluently by the end of key stage 1.
- Strategies for supporting disadvantaged pupils have not been effective. Disadvantaged pupils have not achieved well across the school. Leaders should ensure that the developing curriculum addresses the needs of disadvantaged pupils so that their progress is accelerated.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 23–24 February 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 117324 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10110284 |
| 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 | 349 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Laura Creed |
| Headteacher | Victoria Lyon |
| Website | www.leavesden.herts.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 23–24 February 2016 |

Information about this school

- Leavesden Junior and Mixed Infant School has ongoing building work to create additional classrooms for a two-form entry school.
- The school runs and manages a breakfast club and an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- I met with the headteacher, school leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator and the leader of the pupil premium, and school staff. I held discussions with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and a representative of the local authority.
- The subjects considered as part of this inspection were early reading, mathematics and history. In each subject, I visited lessons, looked at the work in pupils' books and held discussions with subject leaders, teachers and pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, I reviewed school policies, procedures and records. A meeting was held with two designated safeguarding leaders, including the family support worker, to review examples of actions taken to keep pupils safe. I also checked staff's knowledge of how to keep pupils safe from harm.
- I spoke with parents as they arrived at school with their children. I also considered the

53 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 48 free-text messages. I scrutinised the 18 responses to the staff online survey. I spoke with pupils informally during lunchtime and when they were in classes.

Inspection team

Steve Mellors, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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