

Inspection of a good school: Lapal Primary School

Priory Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B62 0BZ

Inspection dates:

15–16 January 2020

Outcome

Lapal Primary School continues to be a good school.

There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a section 5 inspection now.

What is it like to attend this school?

At Lapal Primary School, leaders and staff expect pupils to do their very best in all areas of school life. These high expectations are balanced with a very strong culture of care and support throughout the school.

Pupils rise to staff's high expectations. Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning and standards of attainment are high in all key stages. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are friendly, polite and well-mannered.

Relationships are warm and respectful throughout the school. Pupils like and trust staff. They know that the school's adults will help them if they have any worries. Bullying is rare, and it is dealt with well. Pupils play a key role in supporting each other when problems happen.

The school provides a rich array of activities beyond the classroom. Pupils are enthusiastic participants. Many take on leadership roles in the school. Music and sport are particular strengths.

The school is a close and caring community. Pupils, parents and staff are very proud of their school. All value the clear and principled leadership that the headteacher and senior leaders provide. Leaders continually seek the views of others to find ways in which they might further improve the school.

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

The school provides pupils with a high-quality education. Pupils' learning is planned well in all years and across all subjects. Pupils remember what they have been taught. What they learn in one year builds successfully on what they have been taught in the previous year. Several subjects that inspectors focused on during this inspection stand out as particularly strong.

Leaders have placed reading at the heart of the school. It is taught very well. Staff are determined that all pupils will not only become proficient readers but will enjoy reading. They are successful in this aim. Pupils quickly develop excellent phonics knowledge. Those who fall behind are quickly helped to catch up. Teachers introduce pupils to a wide variety of authors and genres. Pupils are keen to experiment with authors who are new to them. Many pupils are enthusiastic readers.

Pupils make strong progress and achieve very well in mathematics. Teaching ensures that pupils become fluent in basic skills, including times tables. Additionally, pupils become confident mathematicians who can think through problems and then explain their reasoning.

Music is a strength of the school. Learning in music is carefully planned so that pupils' knowledge and skills build steadily as they move through the school. Pupils learn about the great composers and different genres of music. They all perform and compose regularly. For example, inspectors observed an entire class of pupils in Year 4 playing along to a performance of Brahms' Hungarian Dance Number 5. Music extends well beyond pupils' weekly lessons. Many pupils learn instruments, play in the orchestra or sing in the choir.

Staff provide exceptionally good support for all pupils, especially those who need extra help at any time. Teachers and teaching assistants support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) very well. They make sure that pupils with SEND are able to be successful in all aspects of school life. Staff work hard to ensure the well-being of all pupils. Pupils are regularly encouraged to reflect on their own mental health. Staff provide high-quality individual or small-group support for pupils who are struggling.

The Reception class provides children with an excellent start to school. It is an exciting and vibrant place. Skilled adults teach children how to read. They intervene thoughtfully when children are learning through play. The children are confident and enthusiastic, and eager to talk about what they are learning.

Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. They enjoy school and attendance is consistently well above the national average for primary schools. They value the wide range of opportunities that the school offers. Many pupils take on leadership roles. These include being house champions, librarians, digital leaders, anti-bullying ambassadors and members of the pupil leadership team. Other opportunities beyond the classroom include many sporting and musical activities, debating, coding and board games.

The headteacher and senior leaders form a well-established and highly effective team. They have overseen the school's improvement over recent years. They regularly seek feedback, for example from pupils, parents and external consultants. There is a constant focus on improving the school that is shared by leaders and staff.

The Hales Valley Trust supports the school well. Staff benefit from trust-wide training. Pupils enjoy the activities that take place alongside the trust's other schools.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a very strong culture of keeping pupils safe throughout the school. This is recognised by pupils, parents and staff.

All policies and procedures are clear and fit for purpose. Leaders train staff well to spot the signs that pupils might need extra help. Staff support pupils who need extra help extremely well. Much support is provided by school staff, but they also make use of external agencies when appropriate. Leaders ensure that pupils get the support they need when they need it.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is of a consistently high standard throughout the school and in all subjects. The curriculum is implemented especially well in some subjects. These include English, mathematics and music, subjects that inspectors considered in depth as part of this inspection. Leaders recognise that there remains a little variability in how well the curriculum is put into practice in some other subjects. Leaders should work towards ensuring that the curriculum in all subjects is of the same exceptional quality.

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 predecessor school, Lapal Primary School, to be good on 28 February–1 March 2013.

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 the school and 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

Unique reference number	143782
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10122523
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	347
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mark Simpson
Headteacher	Joanna Turner
Website	www.lapal.dudley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school converted to an academy and became a founder member of the Hales Valley Trust in February 2017.

Information about this inspection

- We met with the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding lead, and with other senior leaders. The lead inspector held a meeting with a group comprising the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the Hales Valley Trust and two members of the local governing committee, including its chair.
- We talked to many pupils about their learning and their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. We observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime and as they moved around the school. We also considered the results of a recent survey of pupils' views carried out by the school.
- We scrutinised several documents, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection. We checked that the single central record contained all required information.
- We spoke with parents at the start of the day. We also took account of parents' views by considering 67 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including 43 free-text comments.

- We took account of 27 responses received on Ofsted’s staff inspection questionnaire.
- As part of this inspection, we paid particular attention to reading, mathematics, history and music. In these subjects, we met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, scrutinised pupils’ work and spoke with teachers and pupils.

Inspection team

Alun Williams, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Martina Abbott

Ofsted Inspector

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