

Inspection of Leighton Academy

Minshull New Road, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 3PP

Inspection dates: 10–11 March 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. It is a warm and caring place where pupils feel valued by staff. Relationships are strong. The pupils that we spoke to said that they feel happy, safe and secure. Leaders have high expectations. They want the very best for all pupils. As a result, pupils work hard and their achievement across a range of subjects is improving.

Pupils demonstrate respect and courtesy for each other and the adults who support them. Pupils behave well. The school's '123 Magic' behaviour policy is understood by everyone. Pupils said that any problems with behaviour and bullying are resolved quickly.

Pupils' personal development is promoted well. The members of the pupil leadership team told us that there are plenty of activities before and after school which all pupils enjoy. These include sewing club and taking part in sporting events. Several pupils recently did well in a county-wide athletics tournament.

In the last few years, pupils have not achieved as well as they should, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. The curriculum has improved, but some pupils are not able to build on their previous knowledge in all subjects.

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

Since the previous inspection, leaders have revised the curriculum plans for all subjects. Teachers are starting to identify the subject content that they want pupils to retain and use in their future learning. However, these improvements have not had as much impact on the quality of pupils' education as is needed.

In 2019, attainment in reading was low for too many pupils. Leaders have not kept a close enough check on how reading is taught across the school. Staff use a consistent approach when teaching phonics. Pupils' reading books match the sounds that they are learning so that they can practise and remember them. However, across key stage 2 teachers have not planned the reading curriculum well enough. Some pupils do not develop a love of reading.

Leaders have ensured that there is a clear, structured curriculum in place for mathematics and writing. Staff know what they need to teach in these subjects in each year group. As a result, pupils' achievement in mathematics and writing has improved.

The curriculum in most subjects, including geography, German, history, science and music, is strong overall. This is because subject leaders have effectively identified the key knowledge and skills pupils need to know. Leaders keep a close check on how well plans are being used by teachers.

Leaders are aware that some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and skills because the previous curriculums were not as well-planned as they are now. This stops some pupils from doing as well as they should.

Children's achievement in early years has not been consistently strong. The new leader of early years has put in place clear plans and priorities for the curriculum, which is now well sequenced. However, these plans are still at an early stage of being put into practice. From an early age, adults encourage children to develop their speech and language skills. Staff are skilled in teaching phonics. Adult-led activities encourage children to practise their letters, sounds and understanding. Adults plan suitable activities that develop children's awareness and knowledge of numbers and shapes.

Leaders have a detailed understanding of what support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) require to achieve well across the curriculum. They share this information with teachers, who use this information effectively. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well.

The curriculum is not limited to academic subjects. Pupils enjoy learning outside in the school grounds and through the many extra-curricular opportunities that take place before and after school. They enjoy learning about different parts of the world and how people live differently. Pupils particularly look forward to the residential trip to Germany to meet with their pen pals.

The school has worked tirelessly to improve attendance. This has paid dividends and attendance at the school is above average. This is because of the high-quality support offered to pupils and their families to help them improve attendance. The school has effective procedures in place to deal with any frequent absence.

Governors are effective. They have a detailed understanding of what is working well and what needs to improve. They are thorough in holding leaders to account for pupils' educational achievements and for leaders' use of finances. Governors are very considerate of staff workload. Staff morale is high. Leaders have instilled a strong sense of teamwork across the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

School leaders and governors have established a culture in which the safety and well-being of pupils are the responsibility of all staff.

Leaders have ensured that all staff receive regular training and briefings so that they know exactly what to do if they have a concern that a pupil may be at risk from harm.

Policies and procedures are clearly understood by all. Record-keeping with regard to safeguarding is thorough and up to date.

Leaders have established strong working relationships with other professionals and can draw on the expertise of others when needed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum has a clear and ambitious intent and is increasingly well implemented in most subjects. However, the reading curriculum is not consistently monitored. This means that in key stage 2 teachers do not have the information that they need to build on pupils' prior learning. Leaders need to ensure that the reading curriculum is effectively implemented across all year groups so that pupils build on their knowledge and skills to achieve well in this subject across school.
- The curriculum in early years has been well planned out and is showing early signs of improving children's achievement. However, these plans are at an early stage in their implementation. It is too early to see if the revised plans are having the full impact that leaders intend. Leaders need to ensure that the revised plans enable more children to be ready to meet the demands of the Year 1 curriculum.

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	139752
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10121991
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	565
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mrs Diane Ridings
Principal	Joanna Young
Website	www.leightonacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	20–21 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined The Learning for Life Partnership trust in April 2018. Since then, some new leaders and teachers have been appointed.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the trust’s chief executive officer, principal, head of school, and local governing body and members of the senior leadership team.
- We did deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, geography and German. For each of these subjects, inspection activities included discussions with each subject leader, visits to lessons, speaking with pupils and teachers, and looking at the work in pupils’ books.
- To inspect safeguarding, we looked at safeguarding and child protection policies. We reviewed the school’s record of checks on the suitability of staff and governors. We met with the designated safeguarding leader. We spoke to staff and pupils about keeping safe.

- We listened to pupils read, scrutinised their work and talked informally with them at breaktimes. The views of pupils were also considered during meetings with inspectors.
- We considered the 24 responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Gary Kelly, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Saeeda Ishaq	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Dymond	Ofsted Inspector

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