

Inspection of The Family Learning School

Capital House, Rushey Green, Catford, Lewisham SE6 4AS

Inspection dates: 18–20 May 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very happy to attend this school. They enjoy their learning because teachers plan for pupils to work at their own pace. Pupils feel safe in school. Pupils are respectful to one another and to staff. Pupils have very good relationships with staff and know they can trust them.

Staff have high expectations for all pupils. Pupils learn in school, in the forest and on weekly adventure days. This range of activities provides pupils with different ways to learn. However, leaders have not fully planned how all these activities combine to achieve their ambitious goals. This means that leaders and teachers are not clear what key things they want pupils to remember. Teachers know the pupils well and they plan lessons to meet pupils' individual needs.

Pupils are well behaved. Pupils aged three to 11 work together in mixed-age classes. Older pupils act as role models to the younger children. Some pupils are young leaders and they help others with their learning. Young leaders also read to younger children. Pupils say that bullying very rarely occurs. However, if it did occur, pupils know that they can tell a teacher and they are confident the teacher will resolve it.

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

Leaders have recently redesigned their subject plans for all pupils in the school. The new plans are ambitious and leaders have a clear vision of what they want to achieve. However, leaders have not clearly defined what they want pupils to know and remember in each subject by the end of their time at school. Leaders have started this task, but the current plans do not identify the subject knowledge pupils must know to be successful at the next stage of their education.

For example, pupils were learning about volcanoes. In early years, children were colouring numbers on a number square to make a volcano shape. Older pupils were learning about Mount Vesuvius and Pompeii. Pupils could recall what they had already learned about Pompeii and they remembered key vocabulary. However, pupils were not clear why they were learning this now and how it connected to their previous learning.

Leaders have planned learning to focus on the individual child, discovering pupils' talents and interests. Teachers check what pupils have learned and they use this to plan future lessons. Teachers often work together to plan their lessons. Pupils may do their work on their own, or work in groups with their classmates, or they may get direct support from the teacher. Assessments show that pupils are learning the topics they are taught.

Teachers plan a wide variety of activities for children that ensure that the areas of learning are covered in the early years foundation stage. Children develop early number bonds and number skills through practical activities. Children's achievements are charted in an online system and parents and carers are positive about this.

However, learning for all age groups is not fully planned. Leaders have planned the learning delivered on site, but this does not reflect what pupils do when they are off site at forest school or adventure school.

Leaders prioritise reading and want pupils to have a love of reading. There are well-resourced book corners in the classrooms and main area. Pupils can read when they want to. Older pupils help younger pupils with their reading or read to them. If pupils do not choose to read, teachers encourage them and read with them.

Leaders have planned a phonics programme that starts in early years. Teachers received training to deliver the phonics programme. However, leaders and teachers do not always make sure that the books pupils read match the sounds they know. This means that pupils struggle to read some books as they do not know the sounds or cannot blend them. Leaders want pupils to have the freedom to choose their own books to motivate them to read. However, this could prevent pupils achieving fluency and accuracy.

Pupils are lively and interested in their learning. They listen carefully to instructions from their teachers so they know what to do. They are focused when working on their own and they are respectful to one another when working in groups. Sometimes, when pupils are choosing their own activity, they lose focus and some learning time is lost.

Leaders provide a wide range of activities that extend beyond lessons. All pupils spend one day in forest school each week and a further day on adventure days away from the school site. Pupils go horse-riding and learn to skateboard. Pupils can join many clubs, from learning the ukulele, guitar or piano, to tae kwon do and yoga.

Teachers use high-quality texts to explore emotions and feelings and to develop pupils' personal and social skills. The school's online system shows how collaborative learning reinforces the family ethos that the school promotes. Leaders check on pupils' personal development and well-being to ensure that pupils develop in confidence and experience success.

Teachers check pupils' learning regularly and plan subjects based on their findings. Teachers are identifying emerging special educational needs and/or disabilities in some children. Teachers plan to meet these needs and discuss these plans with parents. Leaders have recently worked with occupational therapists to train staff to meet pupils' needs.

Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards continue to be met, including the statutory requirements for the early years foundation stage. The proprietors of the school are directly involved in its day-to-day running. One of the two directors is the headteacher. Governors have experience in the education sector and have good oversight of the school. They provide appropriate challenge and support for the headteacher.

The school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that all staff receive safeguarding training and are up to date with the latest government guidelines. The safeguarding policy is up to date and available on the school's website. Staff know how to report concerns they may have about pupils' welfare. Staff also know whom they should speak to when they have a concern. Regular discussions among staff keep them aware of the needs of pupils in school. Pupils feel safe in school and staff help pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. Pupils explore areas of safety in an age-appropriate way.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The curriculum is not coherently planned and sequenced in all subjects. Leaders and teachers have not set out the knowledge that they want pupils to remember in all subject areas. This means that pupils may not learn the knowledge they need to successfully move on to the next stage of their education. Leaders must now decide what they want pupils to learn in each subject and plan to meet their agreed end points.
- A key part of the curriculum offer at the school is learning one day a week in the forest school. However, leaders have not planned what they want pupils to learn from this experience and how it connects to their learning in school. As a result, opportunities to develop pupils' learning are missed. Leaders must plan the whole school curriculum, including forest-school activities.
- Leaders are not carefully checking that pupils' reading books connect closely to the phonics knowledge they are taught. This means that pupils struggle to read some books and this could delay their ability to read fluently and accurately. Leaders should ensure that the books that pupils read match the sounds they have been taught.

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

School details

Unique reference number	147168
DfE registration number	209/6006
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10193526
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	52
Number of part-time pupils	16
Proprietor	The Family Learning Group Ltd
Chair	Padraic Fahy
Headteacher	Julie Dunford
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,500
Telephone number	07717 308158
Website	www.familylearningschool.com
Email address	office@familylearningschool.com

Information about this school

- The Family Learning School is registered as an independent day school for boys and girls aged from three to 11 years. It is located in the London Borough of Lewisham.
- The school opened in September 2019. There are currently 52 pupils on roll. Pupils attend on a full-time or a part-time basis. There are currently no pupils with an education, health and care plan.
- This is the first standard inspection of this school.
- The school aims to provide personalised education in order to develop and celebrate the unique potential of each child.
- The school provides a forest-school education once a week for pupils, as well as an adventure day that is also off site.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school was founded by The Family Learning Group Ltd. The company has two directors. One director is also the school's headteacher.

Information about this inspection

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

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We met with the proprietors, one of whom is the headteacher, and governors and other staff. We met with parents when they brought their children to school.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and personal, social, health and economic education. We discussed these subjects with staff, looked at pupils' work, visited lessons and spoke with pupils.
- We checked the single central register of staff suitability. We held meetings with the designated safeguarding lead and the chair of governors. We spoke with staff about their safeguarding training.
- We toured the premises and looked at a range of documentation to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- We observed social times at break- and lunchtime.

Inspection team

Mark Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ruth Dollner

Her Majesty's Inspector

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