

Inspection of a good school: West St Leonards Primary Academy

Harley Shute Road, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN38 8BX

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 October 2021

Outcome

West St Leonards Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. They say that teachers make them work hard but are always available if pupils have problems. Pupils who attend the school's specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) feel the same. One pupil shared that staff and other pupils are always there to 'pick things up' when she struggles. She also agreed with others that one of the best things about the school is Dave the reading dog, although pupils would prefer that he visited the school more often than the usual Friday slot.

Leaders' aspirations for pupils to succeed academically are clear to see. Staff also understand that supporting pupils' social and emotional development is vitally important. Parents are particularly positive about this. Pupils value the wide range of opportunities to take on additional responsibilities in the day-to-day life of their school. These include roles such as reading mentors, tour guides and peer mediators. Older pupils particularly value the contribution peer mediators make to resolving potential problems in and out of the classroom. They were clear that behaviour is better because of this initiative and that serious friendship issues are rare and mostly resolved before they become problematic.

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

This is a good school with many strengths and some areas that need to be developed further. Although staffing is relatively stable, many in leadership positions are quite new to their roles. It is clear to see the new energy that this has created, reflected in the positivity of staff, including those new to teaching.

The school's curriculum engages pupils well. They enjoy the additional opportunities they have in forest school or as young musicians in the making. Year 6 pupils are excited about their upcoming residential trip. Pupils with SEND, including in early years, enjoy an inclusive and supportive environment, where their educational and social and emotional needs are identified and met well.

Leaders are very focused on making sure that the curriculum is designed to meet the needs of pupils at 'this school'. Senior leaders, including those from the multi-academy trust, are very supportive of new curriculum leaders, who are finding their feet in their roles. As a result, collaborative work is underway to ensure that the curriculum is fit for purpose. This includes in science, where leaders are using the lessons learned from previous subject reviews to improve the way teachers plan and deliver lessons. A revised science curriculum map is in place. A new system to highlight what scientific knowledge pupils should already know and remember from previous learning has been introduced. The intention is that this will develop over time, although leaders are already reviewing how this could be improved for younger pupils.

Reading has a high profile at the school. Older pupils enjoy books, love the school's library, and are well versed, opinionated, and confident when sharing their likes and dislikes as far as authors are concerned. Younger pupils are introduced to the joys of books and reading as soon as they start school. Most staff are confident in teaching early reading using the school's current phonics scheme. The school also benefits from specialist staff to help pupils who need additional support in learning to read. However, not all staff are as expert in teaching phonics as they need to be. Leaders know this, have put in additional support where needed, and have made the initial steps in introducing a new phonics scheme, which will include new resources and additional training for staff.

Pupils love their mathematics lessons. Classroom visits showed a high level of consistency in the way mathematics is taught. This included in visits to Reception and to Doves class, the school's specially resourced provision. Mathematics resources are used well to enable pupils to understand concepts and solve problems with growing confidence. Pupils with SEND are also supported well, including by specialist staff where needed.

Pupils behave well because expectations are high and pupils themselves disapprove of any form of disruption to their enjoyment of learning. The school environment is bright and inviting. Staff feel supported and valued and the very large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's parent survey were positive about the school. This includes the way staff cared and provided for their children in the turmoil created by the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The culture to keep pupils safe is strong here. Capacity in the leadership of safeguarding has been strengthened recently with the appointment of a new non-teaching safeguarding officer. Leaders and governors understand their responsibilities and act decisively when they have concerns.

Pupils feel safe and cared for in school. Staff, including those new to the school, are confident that they know what to do if they have any concerns. The very large majority of parents who replied to Ofsted's questionnaire also think that their children feel safe in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all staff who teach or support pupils with their early reading are as skilled as they could be in teaching the school's phonics scheme. While leaders are aware of this and are providing some support, more needs to be done to ensure that phonics is taught in the school with complete fidelity and consistency for all pupils. Although there are plans for a new phonics scheme to be introduced, additional training needs to be put in place now, and as a matter of urgency, to ensure that all pupils benefit from high-quality phonics teaching at all times.
- Leaders are continuing with their planned revision of the school's curriculum, so that it continues to meet the needs of all pupils. The current focus on revising and refining the science curriculum is well underway. Leaders need to ensure that their aspirations for a knowledge-rich and well-sequenced scheme of work becomes a reality across all phases of the school. This will enable staff to have absolute clarity about what knowledge they are teaching pupils, how this connects with what pupils have learned before, and how it prepares them to become the scientists of the future.

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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 18 and 19 October 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

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| Unique reference number | 140179 |
| Local authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 10200257 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy sponsor led |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 391 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Professor Christopher Pole |
| Principal | Dominic O'Regan |
| Website | www.weststleonardsprimaryacademy.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 18 – 19 October 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school has a number of new appointments to leadership positions since the last inspection. This includes the principal and vice principal in 2020, as well as very recent changes in a number of middle leadership roles across the school.
- The school includes a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND known as 'the facility'. The facility has space for 12 pupils and there are currently 11 pupils attending who have physical disabilities and/or moderate learning difficulties. These pupils are mostly taught in the facility each morning and attend mainstream classes each afternoon.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation.

- The inspector held a wide range of meetings with the principal and other leaders in the school. He met with the chair of the local governing board and representatives of the multi-academy trust in an online meeting during day two of the inspection.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and science. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work, and talking to leaders, teachers and pupils about how teaching in these subjects builds on pupils' knowledge over time. The inspector heard pupils read to an adult from the school.
- The inspector assessed the school's culture to keep pupils safe throughout the inspection. A wide range of documentation was considered, including policies and safeguarding records. The single central register of checks on the suitability of adults to work with children was also scrutinised.
- The inspector also gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- Pupils were talked to throughout the inspection to gain their views of the school. Staff and parent surveys were also considered, as well as one confidential letter forwarded to the inspector from a parent.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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