

Inspection of Lickey End First School

School Lane, Lickey End, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B60 1JG

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 September 2021

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 15 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

All staff want the best for all pupils, yet they are not providing it. Leaders know that the quality of education is not good enough. They are working hard to improve the curriculum. However, leaders have not spotted all of the school's weaknesses. Therefore, they are not addressing everything that needs to improve.

Pupils are brimming with confidence and enthusiasm. They are very keen to talk about themselves and their interests. At times, this exuberance spills over into boisterous behaviour. Although usually good humoured, inspectors saw quite a bit of jostling and pushing as pupils lined up or moved around the school. In lessons, most pupils follow the rules and try to get on with their work. However, too often, some pupils cannot focus because others are being silly.

Even so, pupils feel safe in the school. For example, they are not worried about bullying because they know that they can get help. Pupils enjoy school life, but some are frustrated at how often disruptive behaviour interrupts lessons.

Pupils enjoy the activities that are available to them outside of the school day. They told inspectors that they are delighted that clubs have begun again.

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

Around three years ago, governors, school leaders and the local authority identified that the quality of education was not good enough. Curriculum plans lacked detail about the knowledge pupils should learn. Little by little, leaders are addressing this. In a few subjects, plans now help teachers to focus lessons sharply on what pupils need to learn. This helps teachers deliver subject content well so that pupils learn and remember what they need to know. However, in many subjects, leaders have yet to add the necessary detail. To some degree, COVID-19 has slowed improvements down. However, it is not the only reason. Leaders have been too slow to carry through their intentions.

As leaders develop subjects, they are ensuring that plans will deliver the breadth and the depth of the national curriculum. However, the curriculum in the Reception class is not aligned with that in Years 1 to 4. This means that pupils' knowledge is not built from foundations laid down in the early years.

Children settle well into school in the Reception class. They form friendships quickly and establish secure relationships with adults. They are ready to learn and eager to do so. However, the curriculum in the early years is not ambitious enough. It focuses on what children will do, rather than on knowledge they need to learn. A new statutory framework for the early years came into effect on 1 September 2021. The curriculum that Reception children are receiving does not match the ambition of this new framework.

Teachers' use of assessment to check what pupils know is highly variable between subjects. In mathematics, teachers know what pupils should have learned in recent lessons. They check that pupils have learned it. In this way, teachers ensure that pupils can recall basic facts when they move on to more challenging mathematics. Assessment is not so helpful in other subjects. This is largely because the plans for many subjects lack the necessary detail to enable teachers to do this.

Some pupils do not learn to read well because there are weaknesses in the teaching of early reading. Weaknesses in assessment mean that some pupils do not learn phonics in a systematic way. The information gathered is not used to help pupils who are falling behind to catch up and learn all their phonics. The strategies used to support weaker readers are unhelpful. For example, adults ask pupils to guess words by looking at a picture, instead of breaking the word down into sounds. This means that some do not learn the essential building blocks for decoding words.

The quality of education for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) mirrors the overall quality of the curriculum. Where plans are detailed, teachers know what to teach and pupils are more likely to learn what they need. The SEND leader gives teachers helpful support to know how to deliver content to the specific pupils with SEND in their class. Where plans lack clarity and detail, teaching lacks focus, and pupils learn less.

Leaders do not ensure that staff consistently apply high expectations for pupils' behaviour. This is why some pupils behave inappropriately.

Governors carry out their roles effectively. They tackle weaknesses where they find them. They hold leaders to account robustly for improving the quality of education. They seek external support to help them know what needs to improve in the school. However, the improvement support provided did not bring the weaknesses in early reading and the early years to governors' attention.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are aware that risks to pupils exist, even when they are not immediately apparent. Leaders have thought carefully about what dangers their pupils may face in the community. They provide high levels of training to equip staff to be curious and vigilant. However, leaders occasionally do not check that staff understand what the training has taught them.

Governors take their role in safeguarding pupils seriously. For this reason, governors maintain oversight of leaders' actions to help and protect pupils. Governors use an ongoing action plan to promote continuous improvement in the arrangements for safeguarding.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The early reading programme does not systematically teach phonics to all pupils. Assessments and targeted support are not used well enough to help pupils who fall behind to catch up. As a result, too many pupils move into key stage 2 without the ability to decode words fluently. Leaders need to provide an effective early reading programme that ensures all pupils learn to read well.
- The quality of education which children receive in the early years is not good enough. Curriculum planning is driven by topics and activities for children to carry out. It does not set out the knowledge that teachers expect children will learn in the Reception Year. Time is wasted at the beginning of the year before children start to learn phonics and early mathematics. Leaders have not considered how to make the early years curriculum comply with the requirements of the statutory early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework. Therefore, children are not getting off to a good-enough start in their education. Leaders need to ensure that the early years curriculum complies with the statutory EYFS framework and that the curriculum for the Reception Year gives children the basic knowledge that they need to progress onto an ambitious curriculum in Year 1 and beyond.
- The curriculum that is being developed in Years 1 to 4 does not have its foundations in the Reception Year. This means that pupils' knowledge will not build from what they learn in the early years. Leaders need to understand how the early years contributes to the development of pupils' knowledge over time and ensure that their curriculum plans make this happen.
- Staff do not routinely and consistently apply the school's policies and procedures for managing pupils' behaviour. Pupils report that lessons are too often disrupted by silly behaviour. Inspectors observed staff not tackling boisterousness in corridors, disrespectful behaviour towards other pupils or adults and disruption in some lessons. Leaders need to establish an environment where this does not happen.

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

Unique reference number	116661
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10199274
Type of school	First
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mr R Davies
Headteacher	Neil Rintoul
Website	www.lickeyendfirstschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 September 2006, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been significant staffing changes since the school was last inspected. There have been many changes to the senior leadership, including two headteachers and one acting headteacher.
- Since 2015, the school has received external support provided by the local authority to improve the quality of education.

Information about this inspection

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

- The school has not been inspected for 15 years, which is longer than the normal interval between inspections under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. Changes in school effectiveness may have happened at any point in that period. The long time between inspections is because the law changed in 2011; it made most outstanding schools exempt from routine inspection.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the coordinator for SEND and two members of the governing body, including the chair. The lead inspector also spoke with the school's improvement adviser by telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, who is also the designated lead for safeguarding, and with the safeguarding governor. They scrutinised the school's single central record of staff, records of training and information about how safeguarding concerns are identified, logged and followed up. Inspectors spoke with staff about the training they have received and their understanding of safeguarding procedures in the school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in and out of lessons, discussed leaders' analyses of behaviour, bullying and discriminatory incidents, and spoke with pupils, parents and staff about pupils' behaviour. They also considered the views about behaviour shared in the responses to Ofsted's parent, staff and pupil questionnaires.
- Inspectors discussed the school's provision for pupils' personal development with the headteacher, pupils and parents.

Inspection team

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