

Inspection of a good school: Lark Hall Infant & Nursery Academy

Clifton Avenue, Tamworth, Staffordshire B79 8EF

Inspection date:

1 December 2021

Outcome

Lark Hall Infant & Nursery Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Lark Hall is a happy, friendly and welcoming school. Pupils like school because they enjoy the exciting activities it offers. For example, they spoke enthusiastically about exploring nature and building dens in forest school. They also enjoy music lessons taught by a specialist teacher, where they have opportunities to sing and compose.

Leaders and staff have high expectations of all pupils and want the best for them. Consequently, pupils feel safe, work hard and achieve well.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They know and understand the three school rules, 'ready, respectful, safe'. They told inspectors these rules were strengths of the school. Pupils use them to describe what they are doing and how they should behave. Staff manage behaviour very well, so the school is calm and orderly. Breaktimes and lunchtimes are well supervised, and pupils join in organised games enthusiastically. All parents and carers who responded to Ofsted Parent View said the school makes sure pupils are well behaved.

Pupils know who they would turn to for help if they needed it. They say there is no bullying but are confident that, should there be any, adults in school would deal with it quickly and effectively.

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

Lark Hall is well led. Leaders have designed a curriculum that enables pupils to make good progress because they ensure adults teach knowledge in the right order. Leaders and staff check what pupils know and remember. For example, mathematics lessons begin with questions that help pupils to recall what they already know. Pupils practise their mathematical skills and use them as the basis for new learning. As a result, pupils remember their learning well.

Children begin to learn phonics from their first days in school. They quickly learn the sounds they need to read fluently and confidently. Staff regularly check the sounds the children know so that if a child is in danger of falling behind, adults quickly help them to catch up. For example, the specialist phonics teacher helps children to recall and repeat the letter sounds they know. This builds children's knowledge and gives them a sense of achievement.

Adults promote pupils' love of reading well. Pupils read every day. Teachers make sure that pupils read books that match their reading skills. Year 2 pupils enjoy completing quizzes when they have finished a book. Consequently, pupils understand and remember the books they have read.

Leaders prioritise pupils' language skills. In some lessons, staff introduce new words and encourage pupils to use them, so they become familiar with their meaning. For example, in pre-school, children weighed 'moon rocks' and talked about whether they were heavy or light. However, although curriculum plans identify key vocabulary for each subject, this is not taught consistently well. As a result, pupils' understanding of key words and terms does not develop well enough over time.

Staff are confident to teach the curriculum in most subjects. However, due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, the staff have not been able to receive training in all subjects. They are not as confident when teaching some curriculum areas. Consequently, some pupils are not able to explain in depth what they know and understand, for example in religious education (RE).

Almost all the time, pupils listen carefully and concentrate well in lessons. When there is any low-level misbehaviour, adults stop it quickly so that it does not interrupt lessons.

The curriculum promotes pupils' well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, pupils take part in community events and give to charity. They enjoy a range of after-school sports clubs, such as gymnastics. Pupils consider local and world events and learn about different faiths. Forest school helps pupils to appreciate the environment. Year 2 pupils enjoy learning to play the recorder.

Leaders and staff identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively. The extra help from adults ensures that these pupils gain confidence and achieve well.

Staff feel well supported by leaders. They know staff well-being is a priority. For example, they appreciate the recent review of marking, which makes their work manageable. All those who responded to the staff survey said they enjoy working at the school.

Governors are mindful of the staff's workload and well-being. They know the strengths of the school and what needs improving. They ask questions to check on the impact of leaders' actions and hold leaders to account effectively.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They particularly welcome the regular contact from school staff and the wide-ranging information they receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders describe safeguarding as the key to the school's work. All staff are vigilant and understand what to do if they have any safeguarding concerns. They have regular training about protecting pupils from harm. They know pupils, families and the community well. Leaders follow up any safeguarding concerns promptly. They work effectively with specialist agencies when needed. Leaders make all the required checks on adults who work with pupils in the school. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. All parents who responded to Ofsted Parent View said that their children feel safe at school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers are not clear about what pupils should learn each term. As a result, pupils do not make consistently good progress in a few subjects. Leaders should ensure staff teach the intended curriculum effectively in all subjects and develop ways of checking that pupils remember what they have been taught.
- Teachers do not consistently use and explain the key vocabulary identified in subject plans. Consequently, pupils do not build and remember knowledge well enough over time. Leaders should ensure the curriculum develops and broadens pupils' subject-specific vocabulary.

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 in December 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

Unique reference number	140522
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10205163
Type of school	Infant and Nursery
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Marion Couchman
Executive Headteacher	Richard Lane
Website	http://www.larkhallinfants.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is one of three schools in the Mercia Primary Academy Trust, along with Flax Hill Junior Academy and Lakeside Primary Academy. The executive headteacher leads Lark Hall Infant Academy and Flax Hill Junior Academy.
- The trust employs a specialist music teacher and a sports coach.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of schools, the special educational needs coordinator and the early years leader.
- The lead inspector met three members of the governing body, including the chair.
- The lead inspector met with a trustee of the multi-academy trust.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and RE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans and spoke to teachers. They visited a sample of lessons and spoke to some pupils about their learning. They looked at samples of pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans in geography and history.
- Inspectors checked the school's work to keep pupils safe. The lead inspector looked at safeguarding policies and procedures. She looked at the checks leaders make on staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Inspectors talked to pupils about safeguarding and behaviour. Inspectors spoke to staff to check their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding policy and practice.
- Inspectors considered a range of information about the school, including content on the school's website.
- An inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors also took account of parents' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors considered responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Helen Morrison, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mark Bailie

Ofsted Inspector

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