

Inspection of a good school: Loudwater Combined School

School Way, Kingsmead Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP11 1JJ

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 January 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a friendly, happy school where staff care deeply for the pupils in their care. Parents and carers value the school's ethos and its kind, warm atmosphere. The relationships between staff and pupils are strong.

Pupils love many aspects of their school, such as the clubs on offer and swimming lessons in the school pool. They value the friendships they make. Older pupils take on extra responsibilities, such as house captains and helping younger pupils in the lunch hall. They do this diligently. Leaders make the most of the school's location and link this well to what pupils learn. Pupils enjoy the school 'badger cam', watching the animals who live in the school woods.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave and get along together. Low-level disruption is rare. Classrooms are busy places and pupils focus on learning fully. Bullying hardly ever happens and pupils feel safe. Leaders have clear procedures in place to investigate any claims. Pupils understand what bullying is well.

However, some safeguarding procedures are not working as well as they should. In addition, leaders have also not yet identified with enough precision what pupils in each year group should know in most foundation subjects.

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

Leaders are ambitious that pupils 'learn, create and succeed' at Loudwater. In some subjects, such as mathematics and Spanish, leaders have identified precisely what it is pupils should be learning and in what order. In these subjects, pupils learn key knowledge over time and teachers build exactly on what pupils already know. However, in most foundation subjects, this is not yet the case.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They provide work that is interesting and challenging for pupils. However, leaders have not made their expectations of what pupils should know clear enough in most foundation subjects. This hinders teachers in their efforts to design learning activities. Currently, leaders have given teachers too much choice in what they teach. As a result, teachers do not know the most important knowledge that pupils need to remember. They do not always have the information they need to check pupils' understanding accurately. Consequently, pupils are not able to connect key ideas over time and so do not always achieve as well as they could.

On the whole, pupils are learning to read well. Pupils enjoy reading and buzz with excitement when discussing their favourite books and authors. They love listening to their teachers read during daily story time. Leaders have recently introduced a new way to teach phonics. Leaders are working with staff to build their confidence and expertise in teaching this new approach. Teachers carefully match reading books to the sounds pupils have learned. Children in the early years learn sounds quickly and blend them together effectively to make words. Older pupils who have not learned to read fluently quickly enough in the past are now receiving high-quality support that helps them to catch up.

Most pupils develop secure mathematical skills. They use mathematical language with confidence and precision, including in the early years. Teachers recap learning well, which helps most pupils to remember it. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn well in most subjects because leaders and teachers identify their needs well. However, in mathematics, teachers do not think carefully enough about how pupils with SEND can learn best.

Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. For example, children in early years learn about people who help them. In Year 2, pupils start to learn about consent in an age-appropriate way. Assemblies reinforce the school values, often linked to inspirational people. Pupils learn to care for others and their environment. They raise brown trout to release into the local chalk stream. Pupils enjoy learning how to plant native hedgerows to encourage wildlife in their school meadow. Pupils learn about different faiths. They understand people's differences and similarities.

The school's governing body has been through a period of uncertainty, struggling to recruit governors. They have turned a corner here, with two new governors just about to complete their induction. Governors are deeply committed to the school and offer useful support and challenge.

Staff feel proud to work at Loudwater and morale is high. They are fully committed to and capable of making the changes they need to make.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

However, a number of minor weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements were identified during the inspection. These weaknesses have not put children at risk of harm. Leaders started to rectify them during the inspection and have the knowledge to address them successfully.

Staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. They know the signs to look out for that might suggest that a pupil is at risk of harm. They report concerns swiftly. However, the designated safeguarding leaders do not always monitor well enough that the right actions have been taken. Occasionally, records are not where they should be. At the beginning of the inspection, a few safer recruitment checks were missing. These omissions were rectified quickly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all safeguarding arrangements are completely robust. Roles are not as clearly defined as they should be. This places some limits on leaders' oversight of safeguarding concerns. Leaders must review the school's safeguarding procedures, training and record-keeping systems to ensure that they are as effective as they should be.
- Leaders have not yet identified the precise knowledge that pupils need to know and remember from early years to Year 6 in most foundation subjects. Teachers are not able to design lessons that focus on what pupils really need to learn. Consequently, pupils do not learn as well as they could. Leaders should refine the curriculum for foundation subjects so that the key knowledge that pupils need to remember is clearly identified and sequenced.
- Teachers do not consider well enough how the mathematics curriculum may need to be adapted for pupils with SEND. These pupils do not achieve as well as they should in this subject. Leaders need to ensure that precise and effective support is incorporated into mathematics lessons to enable pupils with SEND to learn well.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2013.

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.

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	110524
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10256515
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Randall
Headteacher	Clare Cunnington
Website	www.loudwater.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a breakfast club and an after-school club. This provision is managed by the school.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with senior leaders, staff, pupils and four governors, including the chair. She also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. She spoke to subject leaders, staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. She heard pupils read to an adult from the school. The inspector also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector checked the single central record, reviewed safeguarding records and spoke to leaders, staff and pupils. The inspector also discussed safeguarding with those responsible for governance and with the local authority.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation of the school and school development plan.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and staff to discuss the wider development of pupils, behaviour, well-being and workload.
- She took into account parents' responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' free-text comments. She also considered the 25 responses from staff and the 117 responses from pupils to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Lea Hannam, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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