

Inspection of an outstanding school: Ladywood School

Masefield Road, Little Lever, Bolton, Lancashire BL3 1NG

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 January 2023

Outcome

Ladywood School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff at Ladywood School value every pupil for their uniqueness. Staff have high expectations for every pupil, and this is realised. Every effort is made to overcome pupils' barriers to learning. Pupils talked to inspectors about 'finding their brave'. They develop resilience, learn to 'have a go' and try something new. With the support and encouragement from staff, pupils gain the confidence that they need to excel.

The school's inspiring and creative community, where staff make learning fun, allows pupils to thrive. Respect and kindness are golden threads throughout all that takes place at the school. Staff model and reinforce the school values, and pupils respond to this exceptionally well. Pupils make friends and enjoy playing and learning together. Staff take time to get to know every pupil. This builds strong trusting relationships which ensures that pupils are happy, feel safe and enjoy coming to school.

Every pupil has a voice. The strong focus on communication allows pupils to express their feelings, wishes and opinions. Staff listen and understand what a pupil has to say. A wide range of resources, including visual, sign and verbal are used to allow all pupils to communicate with others. On the very rare occasions when pupils fall out or there are incidents of bullying, staff resolve issues quickly.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum that ensures every pupil has the chance to reach their potential. The curriculum meets the specific needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities exceptionally well. It also fosters their love of learning. Leaders have thought carefully about what pupils will need to know and when this should be taught. This means that pupils can know and remember more over time. Pupils' individual education, health and care plans (EHC plan) are carefully broken down into small achievable targets. These targets are woven throughout a full range of subjects. This makes sure that pupils can enjoy success when they reach their goals, but also means they can build on what they have already learned. The school's curriculum

enables every pupil to achieve exceptionally well. The strong focus on communication ensures that pupils will be ready for their next stage of learning.

Teachers ensure that the delivery of the curriculum is personalised to meet the needs of every pupil in their class. Teachers are innovative and creative in their thinking. They select activities that will support pupils to learn and remember what they have been taught. Staff deepen pupils' learning through repetition and links to other subjects and topics. Teachers use assessment strategies well to check pupils' understanding and to inform the next steps in learning.

Reading is an integral part of school life. Every opportunity is exploited to immerse children in the early years, and pupils across the rest of the school, into the world of books through stories, poems, songs and non-fiction texts. Staff create environments where pupils can explore characters, themes and activities to support their reading. For example, some pupils made a den for the tiger who came to tea and in another class, pupils made jam tarts for a tea party. Staff have expert knowledge of phonics. They use this well to support pupils to recognise letters and sounds. Over time, some pupils become confident, fluent readers.

Staff work with a number of external professionals, including speech and language and occupational therapy, to support each pupil's personal needs. Staff are quick to notice when a pupil may need some additional support. Staff ensure that pupils have access to sensory breaks or resources that will reduce their anxiety and allow them to continue with their learning. There is very little low-level disruption to learning or the school day as a result.

Leaders' work to extend pupils' broader development is outstanding. Leaders and staff go above and beyond to give pupils a wide and rich set of experiences. Regular trips to community parks, cafes and shops support pupils' independence skills. Outdoor learning allows pupils to appreciate the world around them, making dens, dancing in the rain and walking with alpacas. Trips to community places of worship and learning about cultural festivals help pupils to understand and celebrate difference.

Pupils have opportunities to develop their talents and interests, for example, in sports, dance, art and music. The annual Year 6 residential trip gives pupils the opportunity to work together and prepare for their move into secondary education.

A wide range of therapeutic support is also available in school. This includes school counsellors, massage, play and social therapies to meet pupils' sensory, personal and emotional needs.

Leaders have created an environment where everyone is valued. There is a culture of continuous improvement. Staff are enthusiastic and passionate and want the best for every pupil. Staff believe that leaders take their workload into account. They spoke positively about the strength of teamwork within their school community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff have a secure understanding and are quick to notice any changes in a pupil's appearance, behaviour or body language that may indicate a cause for concern. Leaders are swift to take any necessary action and work closely with external agencies, including the local authority, to secure the help required for pupils and families.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is an integral part of the school curriculum. Pupils learn how to stay safe in school and the community. They also know how to communicate any worries to an adult.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Ladywood School, to be outstanding in January 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.

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	146406
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10256098
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	193
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Heather Scott
Headteacher	Susan Tailor
Website	www.ladywood.bolton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Ladywood School converted to become an academy in October 2018. When its predecessor school, Ladywood School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- Ladywood School is part of Woodbridge Trust.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school has a temporary second site called Little Ladywood. This caters for children in the Reception class and Year 1 pupils. The Little Ladywood site is co-located with Essa Academy, Lever Edge Lane, Bolton.
- All pupils at the school have an EHC plan. The school caters for pupils with a wide range of needs. These include autism spectrum disorder and speech, language and communication needs.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, the chief executive officer and trustees of Woodbridge Trust, including the chair of the trust. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading and communication, PSHE and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- During the inspection, inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. They also spoke with leaders and staff.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents and carers expressed through Ofsted Parent View. They also considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and school's own survey on pupils.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sheldon Logue

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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