

# Inspection of a good school: The Leigh Academy

Green Street Green Road, Dartford, Kent DA1 1QE

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Inspection dates:

25 and 26 April 2023

## Outcome

The Leigh Academy continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be part of The Leigh Academy. They enjoy school and the good friendships they develop. Bullying is rare and always followed up. The working relationships pupils have with staff are strong. Pupils enjoy their lessons and want to do their best. They belong to one of five colleges which operate as 'small schools'. Each college has its own distinct identity that fosters a sense of community. The high-quality pastoral care pupils receive means that they feel safe and happy. They appreciate the help of the student services managers, as well as other staff in their colleges.

High expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning are embedded. Leaders and staff strive for disruption-free learning where the aim is 'opening minds to success'. The rewards system helps to achieve this. Teachers recognise and celebrate pupils' achievements regularly. This spurs pupils on even more. Pupils are taught how to be resilient and respectful learners who are well prepared to take their place in a global community.

Pupils have exceptional opportunities. The vast array of clubs, trips, and internal and external events is impressive. For example, students in Year 12 attended a university trip during the inspection. Other pupils took part in a national mathematics challenge.

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

Pupils study a range of subjects during their time at The Leigh Academy. Every subject is designed to gradually increase pupils' knowledge and understanding. The content staff teach is organised in a logical way from Year 7 through to the sixth form. Leaders have sensibly identified meaningful connections across different subjects. For example, pupils study First World War poetry which fosters links between English and history. Staff strive for pupils to become knowledgeable, open minded, reflective, inquiring and caring. They also teach pupils to be risk takers and good communicators.

Leaders have invested time and energy into the school's reading approach. Pupils read carefully selected books and texts. Staff are trained well and are knowledgeable about how to support pupils with reading. Pupils who need extra reading help get it quickly. As a result, pupils are constantly improving their reading skills.

Pupils' learning is fun and keeps them hooked. Teachers explain new concepts and ideas clearly and break them down so that pupils understand them. Pupils like to discuss what they learn with peers. Teachers ask pupils lots of questions that make them think hard. These questions also help teachers to check what pupils understand, and tweak their lessons accordingly. While many teachers do this effectively, it is not embedded across every classroom. This is something leaders are actively improving. The curriculum prepares pupils well for the future. Regular careers education and advice shine a light on the various options open to them. Pupils gain a range of qualifications. The number of pupils studying the English baccalaureate is rapidly increasing.

Staff understand pupils' needs. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Helpful strategies support pupils in class. The vast majority of staff use them well. However, there is more to do to embed their use in every classroom. The school has two specially resourced provisions for pupils with SEND. The lead inspector spoke to a small group of pupils who spoke eloquently and gave a glowing review of the support they receive. One pupil showed the lead inspector how he is raising awareness about deaf people.

An extremely well-thought-out 'healthy minds' programme covers all the important topics. For example, pupils learn about budgeting, the pressures faced by parents, healthy relationships, equality, diversity, different religions, problem-solving, emotions and so many more. Pupils have leadership opportunities here. The cultural diversity society and unity group work hard to promote awareness of different cultures and the LGBTQ+ community. A group of pupils with SEND head up a panel that works to improve the experiences of those with SEND in the school. Pupils not only want to make a difference in the school, but globally. They help a community of 300 people in a South African orphanage through regular fundraising. The lead inspector enjoyed watching many of the videos on Leigh TV that showcase the many events pupils get involved in.

Trust leaders and local academy board members support the school effectively. They know the school and provide a sensible balance of challenge and support. They draw on the expertise from across Leigh Academies Trust to help the school constantly strive for more. Staff like working here, with some describing the school as being like a family. They welcome the help they receive from leaders, particularly around workload.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Led by a knowledgeable designated safeguarding lead, the safeguarding team is committed to making sure pupils are safe. Strong recruitment processes and regular training and safeguarding briefings mean that staff know what to look out for and when they need to take action. Well-established systems help staff to report their concerns.

Safeguarding leaders swiftly act on these concerns. Pupils also know what to do if they have any issues. Strong partnership working with other professionals means that pupils and their families get the help they need. Staff exploit every opportunity to teach pupils how to keep themselves safe.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Not all teachers check pupils' understanding of what they learn as effectively as they could. Additionally, a minority of teachers do not use the most helpful strategies that have been identified to support pupils' individual needs as well as they could. Leaders need to further embed the stronger practice seen in the majority of lessons so that it is securely and consistently embedded.

## **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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2017.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135297
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256481
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1356
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	211
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Frank Green
<b>Principal</b>	Julia Collins
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.leighacademy.org.uk">www.leighacademy.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 and 16 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The Leigh Academy is a school within Leigh Academies Trust.
- The school has two specially resourced provisions. These are for deaf pupils and pupils who have speech, language and communication needs.
- The school is an International Baccalaureate World School which is registered for the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme and the International Baccalaureate Career-related Programme.
- At the time of the last inspection, there was a co-principal model in place. Since then, one of the co-principals has become the sole principal of the academy.
- The school uses one registered alternative education provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and

engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## 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 held a wide range of meetings with the principal, other leaders, and teaching and support staff in the school. The lead inspector met with the chair of the local academy board, a trustee and two additional members of the local academy board. He also met with the chief executive officer and academies director from Leigh Academies Trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. 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. The lead inspector also heard some pupils read to an adult.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils to gather their views about the school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and the free-text comments received during the inspection. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors held meetings with safeguarding leaders, trustees and members of the local academy board, teachers and pupils. They scrutinised the single central record and sampled safeguarding records.
- The lead inspector held discussions with a leader at one registered alternative education provider.
- Inspectors also took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies and local academy board minutes.

## Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Wayne	Ofsted Inspector
Paula Sargent	Ofsted Inspector

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