

Inspection of a good school: Ladypool Primary School

Stratford Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, West Midlands B11 1QT

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 May 2023

Outcome

Ladypool Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very enthusiastic about their learning. The recent changes leaders have made to the way teachers teach subjects mean that pupils are now doing very well in their learning. This includes in writing, where they have made rapid improvements this year after low standards and progress in previous years. Leaders promote high aspirations for all, stating, 'You can be anything you want to be.'

Pupils embrace the school's values of 'respect, grow and excel'. They demonstrate these, not just in their lessons, but in their behaviour around school. They get on well with others from different backgrounds. They showed their concern for the wider world by raising money for victims of the recent earthquake in Turkey. They also chose the products to make and sell at the summer fair to raise funds.

Leaders make sure pupils can celebrate their own culture as well as gain experiences different to their own. For example, pupils have visited Lickey Hills Country Park, and Birmingham Symphony Hall, where pupils have performed at musical events.

Pupils have a strong understanding of keeping themselves safe when using social media. They said they would tell adults whenever rare incidents, such as cyber-bullying, have arisen. Leaders deal with these effectively.

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

The school declined soon after the last inspection, following a period of instability in senior leadership. This led to low standards in mathematics and writing, with pupils not making enough progress. New leadership has turned this around in a short space of time. There has been a significant turnover of staff and an overhaul of the curriculum, so that now pupils are making significant progress in their learning.

Leaders have revised the curriculum to ensure that it is ambitious and well sequenced. All subjects are taught discretely and with sufficient time allocated to enable full coverage of the intended programmes of study.

Leaders have eradicated weaknesses in the teaching of reading which they had identified. They have put in place a single phonics programme to ensure fidelity to one scheme. They have made sure pupils read books that are well matched to the letters and sounds they know. The programme is taught consistently well. As a result, pupils at different starting points are gaining the knowledge and skills they need to be confident and fluent readers. Children in Reception start to learn new letters and sounds very early on when they join the school. Leaders have fostered a love of reading throughout the school. Pupils are exposed to a wide variety of writers, authors and illustrators to overcome pupils' overwhelming view that mathematics is more important than English.

Work in pupils' books shows that standards of writing throughout the school have improved. This is a result of leaders introducing successfully a new scheme in writing. All pupils are making rapid gains from early years onwards, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language. This is due to the way teachers have appropriately adapted work for them.

In mathematics, which almost all pupils spoken to said was their favourite subject, teachers have ensured that they revisit themes in greater depth or provide additional practice where pupils are not yet secure. In Reception, children are able to correctly identify the properties of different shapes.

In computing, where pupils have a dedicated lesson every week, leaders and teachers have specialist knowledge to be able to teach the curriculum successfully. There are sufficient resources for all pupils to access their work in school and at home. In computing, as with other subjects, older pupils have some gaps in their learning, where the subject was not previously taught consistently well. Leaders check pupils' work carefully to plan next steps or identify where misconceptions still exist.

Pupils work well together. Lessons are virtually free of low-level disruptive behaviour. However, a minority of pupils spoken to, or responding to the survey, still perceive that behaviour is not yet good. Attendance is improving from a low level last year. Persistent absence remains high, although it has fallen.

Leaders promote pupils' personal development very well. Pupils enjoy the wide range of clubs on offer, including art, craft and specialist sports coaching. They benefit from experiences of the world of work, starting with role play of different occupations in early years. Pupils learn about different families through the sensitive way teachers present information.

Leaders are highly mindful of staff workload. Every member of staff who responded to the survey agreed with this. Governors are highly supportive of senior leaders' well-being.

Governors fulfil their role in order to hold leaders to account. They know the school well and what needs to improve further.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders are well trained to make sure pupils who may need additional support are identified and receive additional help promptly. They engage well with external agencies as necessary. Staff are vigilant in recording their concerns, however minor they may appear to be. Systems for responding to allegations and for recruiting staff ensure that all appropriate checks are carried out. Pupils are taught in lessons about different ways to keep themselves safe, including online. They learn about their mental and physical well-being through events such as 'safeguarding week'. Governors ensure that leaders are fulfilling their statutory duties.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A legacy of low progress and standards has led to gaps in pupils' learning in some subjects. As a result, pupils leaving last year were not well prepared for the transition to secondary school. Leaders should ensure that by the time current pupils leave primary school, these gaps in learning have been addressed so that they are ready for Year 7.
- Although attendance is improving, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is still high. Consequently, some pupils are missing key learning. Leaders should ensure that persistent absence falls further so pupils do not miss out on learning.
- A significant minority of pupils spoken to during the inspection and those responding to the pupil survey were not so positive about behaviour in school. Some remain worried, having heard about or experienced poor behaviour previously. Leaders should engage more with pupils' views in order to respond to any underlying concerns pupils still have about behaviour.

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 May 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

Unique reference number	103265
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10240170
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Elaine Ashraf
Headteacher	Fiona Atherton
Website	www.ladypool.bham.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 May 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the previous headteacher left in April 2022 after a long absence, during which the previous deputy headteacher was acting headteacher. The previous deputy headteacher left in July 2022. An acting executive headteacher was in post from September 2022, with an interim deputy headteacher in place until the current headteacher was appointed on 31 October 2022. The interim deputy headteacher's post was made permanent in January 2023. An assistant headteacher has recently been appointed. A number of teaching staff left shortly after the current headteacher was appointed.
- The number of pupils on roll has fallen significantly since the last inspection.
- Many of the governors, including the chair, were not in post at the time of the last inspection.
- The school does not make use of 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 has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other members of staff.
- The inspector spoke to several groups of pupils.
- The inspector met four members of the governing body, including the chair.
- The inspector met a representative from the local authority and a strategic leader for special educational needs.
- The inspector took account of responses to the Ofsted Parent View free-text service, the online questionnaire, as well as the staff and pupil surveys.
- The inspector considered information on pupils' behaviour, attendance, personal development, safeguarding and child protection.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and computing. He also looked closely at writing in a number of other subjects, including in the early years foundation stage. For each deep dive, the inspector 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. The inspector also listened to pupils reading.

Inspection team

Mark Sims, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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