

Inspection of Leedon Lower School

Highfield Road, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 3LZ

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Leedon Lower School are welcoming and friendly. They enjoy the activities staff plan for them. Assembly is a very special part of the school day and provides an opportunity for pupils and staff to come together. They enjoy singing and learning about the school values.

Improvements have been made in the early years. This supports children to make a strong start to school. However, as pupils move through the school, there are inconsistencies in the quality of education they receive. This has created gaps in pupils' knowledge. Consequently, pupils are not making as much progress as they could.

The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is good. When issues do arise, including bullying, pupils know that adults will deal with them. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, and their children are happy and safe.

Pupils have lots of opportunities to attend a wide range of clubs. These include, gardening, film making, sports and guitar lessons. The choir proudly performed at Wembley Arena. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as acting as sports leaders and helping the younger pupils.

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

Leaders have a newly planned, ambitious curriculum in place. They have developed the sequencing to ensure that new learning builds on prior learning, from early years to Year 4. However, this work is new. There has not been the rapid change required to drive pupils' progress. Subject leaders have not yet developed systems to monitor, evaluate and develop the curriculum.

The curriculum is taught well in some areas. Where this is the case, pupils can learn and remember information well. Teachers check pupils' knowledge and use this information to plan the next steps for pupils. However, in some areas, teachers do not always check what pupils have understood and learned in lessons. As a result, staff cannot address errors and misconceptions quickly, meaning pupils have gaps in their knowledge.

Leaders have made improvements since the last inspection. However, some improvements needed have not been made or identified quickly enough. Leaders work well with outside agencies to get the support they need. For example, recent work with early years specialists has improved the provision. Planning is adapted to follow the children's interests. Children engage with learning positively, whether supervised by an adult or working with their peers. Consequently, children achieve well and are well prepared for key stage 1.

Reading has a high priority across the school. Children learn to read as soon as they start school. Pupils enjoy reading. Leaders have worked closely with outside agencies and have now introduced a new phonics programme, which is already having a positive impact on pupils' reading. Pupils' reading books match the phonics sounds they know. This is helping the pupils to read with confidence and develop their fluency.

Pupils' written work is inconsistent across the curriculum. Staff do not always have sufficiently high expectations of pupils in the foundation subjects. Some pupils do not hold their pencils correctly, making handwriting difficult for them.

A clear system has been put in place this academic year to identify any support pupils may need. Leaders have ensured that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported quickly. Adaptations are made to ensure that all pupils can access the same curriculum. The school works well with outside agencies to get the help needed for pupils with SEND.

Pupils generally behave well. There is a positive and respectful culture in the school. Pupils are polite and courteous. When pupils find it difficult to behave, support is given to help them.

Leaders promote pupils' development and welfare effectively. Pupils learn about equality, racism and treating everyone with respect. Pupils learn about diversity through the curriculum, especially through the carefully chosen personal, social and health education curriculum. Pupils are well prepared to move on to middle school.

After intensive training this year, governors now have a full understanding of their role. They are confident when challenging and supporting leaders. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors have worked with school leaders, the local authority and the Department for Education to create a clear plan to address weaknesses in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They are clear on how to stay safe in the local contexts and when online. Pupils know trusted adults they can go to if they have a concern.

Staff understand how to keep pupils safe. This is because leaders have ensured that staff are well trained and know how to spot signs of potential harm. Leaders act swiftly when any concerns are raised. They work well with external agencies to get the help pupils need.

Leaders and governors carry out all the required checks to ensure that adults are suitable to work in schools.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Senior leaders do not always have the capacity to drive the rapid change needed. Areas that require improvement are not identified quickly enough. Leaders need to ensure that they continue to work closely with the local authority so that leadership has sufficient capacity to deliver effective change that increases pupils' progress.
- Many subjects have new curriculum plans. Currently, systems are not yet in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and the impact on pupils' learning. Subject leaders need to be provided with high-quality training and support to enable them to monitor and improve their curriculum area to ensure that pupils have the best quality provision.
- A new whole-school assessment system has recently been put in place. The system is yet to be fully established. This means that leaders do not yet have a clear overview of how well pupils are achieving. Leaders need to ensure that the system is used consistently to help inform planning and to check that pupils have learned and understood the curriculum.
- In some lessons, teachers do not always use effective strategies to identify what pupils know and remember. This means that some pupils have gaps in their knowledge which are not routinely addressed. Teachers need to be provided with training to help them check pupils' understanding and to use this information to plan the next stage of pupils' learning.
- There is inconsistency in the quality of pupils' written work. Pupils do not maintain a high standard of work across all the curriculum areas. Leaders need to ensure that teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils' work in all areas of the curriculum.

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	109509
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10255121
Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	432
Appropriate authority	The governing bod
Chair	Nicola McIntyre
Headteacher	Richard Benson
Website	www.leedonlowerschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 and 22 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average lower school, with 12 classes. Children in the early years are taught in three Reception classes and a Nursery, which takes children on a full- or part-time basis.
- The school uses the services of two alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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.
- This is the first inspection since the school was judged to require improvement in May 2019.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, design and technology and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair and vice chair of governors. The lead inspector also held a meeting with a local authority representative.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record and reviewed safeguarding paperwork and systems. Inspectors spoke with leaders, teachers, support staff, members of the governing body, and pupils to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in school.
- Inspectors considered the 98 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. They also considered the five responses to the questionnaire for staff and the 15 responses to the questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Julie Winwood, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Laura Hewer	Ofsted Inspector
Wayne Jarvis	Ofsted Inspector

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