

Inspection of a good school: Great Leighs Primary School

Aragon Road, Great Leighs, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 1RP

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 July 2023

Outcome

Great Leighs Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are chatty and enthusiastic about the many positives of attending this school. They like their teachers. They enjoy their lessons, which are 'fun' and 'interesting'. Pupils are keen to learn. They respond well to teachers' high expectations. They do not give up when learning becomes difficult. Pupils have a healthy appetite for competition. Recently, pupils were keen to grow sunflowers and see who grew the highest.

Pupils happily take on responsibilities. These include playing with younger children, being a school councillor and a family captain. They contribute well to the local community. Recently, several pupils took part in the interview process for appointing the local vicar. They enjoy many opportunities to extend their interests and talents, including representing their school in sports fixtures. Most pupils participate in an extra-curricular club.

Relationships between pupils and staff are warm and respectful. Pupils trust staff to deal with any issues should they arise. Pupils behave well during lessons and when they play outside. They demonstrate the school's behaviour policy's approach of 'kind hands, kind words, kind feet'. Pupils know that it is important to support one another.

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

Leaders have put an ambitious curriculum in place. The curriculum focuses on developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of living diverse, healthy and sustainable lifestyles. This equips pupils well to live in modern Britain.

Leaders have strengthened the curriculum across different subjects. They have improved the English curriculum, including how pupils are taught to write. Pupils have many opportunities to write at length about their ideas and views on the world. In a recent speech competition, pupils wrote maturely about a wide range of topics, including equal opportunities in business. Pupils have a rich reading diet that supports their writing. Teachers' sharp focus on accuracy with spelling, punctuation and grammar helps many

pupils produce high-quality writing. Children in Reception use correct letter formation and practise early writing in a variety of ways.

In other subjects, curriculum thinking and how this is taught are well-established. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They receive regular training and advice from subject leaders. They also benefit from specialist support to teach subjects such as music and physical education. Teachers are highly skilled at explaining new concepts. They model the use of new subject vocabulary effectively. Pupils talk confidently about their learning, using appropriate terminology. Pupils remember their learning because staff build in opportunities for pupils to revisit important subject content.

Staff have been well-trained to teach the new phonics programme. Pupils read books that match the sounds they know. This helps pupils to experience success and enjoy reading. Staff are quick to identify pupils who find reading difficult. However, leaders are sometimes slow to provide pupils with the extra help they need to catch up. This includes some children in Reception at the early stages of reading.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported to access the curriculum. Teachers use pupils' support plans and a variety of strategies during lessons to aid pupils' learning. Staff's knowledge and understanding of how to support pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) is developing. A local specialist provider provides advice and guidance. This helps pupils access full-time education when they have not done so in the past.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. In Reception, adults gently guide children to make the right choices and decisions, such as sharing equipment and waiting their turn to speak. Pupils work hard in lessons and are keen to discuss their learning. Pupils are motivated to gain 'family points'. They like to showcase their work to others. Pupils enjoy being rewarded with hot chocolate and cake with the headteacher on Fridays.

The wider curriculum provides pupils with many opportunities that support their personal development. Leaders make sure that trips enhance pupils' learning of the curriculum. This includes visits to heritage sites such as Colchester Castle when pupils learn about the Romans. A visiting drama company runs Shakespeare week, which culminates in a pupil performance. Pupils also have opportunities to visit places of worship. This helps them to understand different cultures and faiths.

Staff feel well supported by leaders, for example through opportunities to plan and undertake tasks together. Leaders make sure that when staff have a task to do, they get sufficient time to complete this. This has a positive impact on staff's work-life balance and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders manage complex safeguarding cases well. They have a deep understanding of pupils' lives through effective liaison with external agencies. This means they can ensure timely and helpful support for vulnerable pupils and their families. Record-keeping is thorough. Leaders undertake the necessary pre-employment checks when they appoint staff.

Staff receive regular training and updates so they know how to spot when a pupil may be at risk from harm. They understand their responsibilities well. This includes keeping a watchful eye when pupils use the large playground climbing equipment.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to stay safe. They also benefit from inputs from visiting speakers.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In reading, leaders are slow to act on the information they receive when teachers check pupils' learning. Leaders do not put the right support in place quickly enough. This means that some pupils do not make sufficient progress over time. In particular this slows the development of pupils' reading skills. Leaders should make sure they readily provide the extra help and support pupils need so they achieve as well as they can.

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 January 2014.

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	114852
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10288438
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Richard Thomas
Headteacher	James Garlick
Website	www.greatleighs.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed as the substantive headteacher in February 2023. Prior to this he was the deputy headteacher and then the acting headteacher.
- The school uses local specialist provision in another school for pupils with SEMH needs. Leaders do not currently use 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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the chair and other members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, staff and pupils about the school's provision.
- The inspector also spoke with representatives from the local authority and the specialist provision for pupils with SEMH needs.
- The inspector spoke with parents when they dropped their children at the school.

- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in and around the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, the inspector 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.
- To ascertain the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the school's information on behaviour and bullying. In addition, she reviewed safeguarding records and spoke with governors, leaders, staff and pupils about safeguarding arrangements.
- The inspector considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. She also reviewed responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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