

Inspection of a good school: Lessness Heath Primary School

Erith Road, Belvedere, Kent DA17 6HB

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 September 2023

Outcome

Lessness Heath Primary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Ann-Marie Bolton. This school is part of the Primary First Trust which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Andrew Moorhouse, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by William John Harwood.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are safe and happy at this welcoming and friendly school. They enjoy playing in the school's large grounds and even sometimes taking Lola, the school dog, for a walk. Pupils said that adults listen to them and help them if they have any worries.

Pupils achieve well because the school's ambitious curriculum has been carefully set out, beginning in Nursery. Pupils who need extra support to access the curriculum receive it promptly. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in every aspect of the school's life.

Staff ensure that pupils understand the high expectations for their conduct. Pupils are polite and move sensibly around the school. Most pupils learn well, and disruption to lessons is rare. Bullying is infrequent, and staff deal with any incidents quickly and effectively. Older pupils develop a sense of responsibility by running the 'Reading Café' for younger pupils and visiting a local care home for older people.

The school has set out what it calls its 'Lessness Legacy'. This programme aims to broaden pupils' horizons through a programme of enriching activities, leaving them with special memories of their time in the school. For example, younger pupils travel on a train and spend a day in a seaside town. Older pupils have Spanish pen pals and watch a Shakespeare play at the Globe Theatre.

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

The school ensures that children get off to a strong start. Nursery and Reception children benefit from a carefully planned induction, which includes sessions where parents and

carers stay and play with their children. As a result, even in their first weeks in school, children are settled and rapidly learning how to share, take turns and follow routines. The school works closely with parents to help children to develop their communication skills by sharing carefully chosen books and emphasising important vocabulary. As a result, children become increasingly confident in expressing themselves. For instance, they can talk about position, explaining whether an object is on top of another object or next to it. This work on language development helps to ensure that they are well prepared for their next stage of education. For example, as they progress through the school, older pupils learn more complex vocabulary to talk about how they change their body position in physical education (PE).

Working effectively with other schools within the trust, the school has developed in-depth curriculum thinking which sets out the knowledge and skills pupils need to learn at each stage. This helps teachers to check pupils' understanding of the most important subject content, and build in extra time in lessons to recap where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge. For example, in mathematics, pupils revise key learning about counting and sorting from Reception, as they learn more and become more fluent with numbers over time.

Well-established and effective procedures ensure that the school identifies pupils' additional needs promptly and precisely. The school works well with parents and specialist services to make informed decisions about how best to support pupils with SEND. Teachers have the information they need to provide effective help to pupils. As a result, these pupils join in with the same learning as others. Pupils with SEND are fully included in wider school life. For example, at lunchtimes, staff make use of symbols to help pupils to choose what they would like to eat.

The teaching of reading is a priority. The school has recently adopted a new scheme to teach phonics, which is helping pupils to become fluent and accurate readers. The school has also invested in new reading books which closely match the phonics that pupils are learning. Pupils practise reading at home and with staff frequently. They are regularly assessed and given any extra help they need to catch up. In a few instances, the school has not made sure that the phonics programme is delivered with precision. While gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge are identified and planned for, these gaps are not being addressed as rapidly as they could be for a small number of pupils. There are also occasions where pupils who have fallen behind with reading are practising with books that are too difficult for them. The school is taking steps to address these areas with rigour.

A positive approach to rewarding good behaviour encourages pupils to do their best. On occasion, there is some low-level disruption in lessons. Teachers quickly refocus pupils and remind them of the school's expectations. Pupils' wider development is prioritised. They learn about a diverse range of writers, artists and musicians and reflect on their own responses to develop their appreciation. Their learning in school is enriched through visits to galleries, theatres and concert halls. For example, a trip to a restaurant kitchen enabled pupils to develop their knowledge about food and cooking. It also prompted them to reflect on the wide range of skills a professional chef needs to learn.

Leaders at all levels work well with trustees to identify and work on priorities for further improvement. Staff are very positive about working for this school and appreciate leaders' support for their well-being and management of their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a minority of cases, the new phonics scheme is not being put into practice with the rigour that the school intends. As a result, some pupils who are struggling with their reading are not catching up as quickly as they could. The trust should ensure that teachers receive the additional training they need to deliver the agreed phonics programme with precision.

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 December 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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

| | |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Unique reference number | 141866 |
| Local authority | Bexley |
| Inspection number | 10268727 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 669 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | William John Harwood |
| Headteacher | Miss Ann-Marie Bolton |
| Website | www.lessnessheath-bexley.co.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 5 and 6 December 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Lessness Heath Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school has been part of the Primary First Trust since 2015.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2020.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast and an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other leaders and staff at the school. They met with the deputy chair of the trust and other trustees, and the trust's chief executive officer and education director.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, PE and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, and the online surveys for staff and pupils. They also spoke with parents at the school gate.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Julian Grenier, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Jackson

Ofsted Inspector

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