

Inspection of Longwood School

Bushey Hall Drive, Bushey, Hertfordshire WD23 2QG

Inspection dates:

17 to 19 October 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

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and their parents, cherish the school's sense of community. The buddy system allows older pupils to mentor younger ones, teaching them how to behave in assemblies and on school trips. Pupils freely give up their time to litter pick in the surrounding streets, looking after the local area. Responsibilities, like being a school councillor, encourage pupils to effect change.

Being charitable is a big part of school life. Pupils organise fundraising to support local, national and worldwide initiatives. It crystallizes pupils' consideration of others. Ultimately, the kindness that threads through the school ensures pupils feel safe.

Pupils enjoy the school's extensive extracurricular offer. Pupils' musicality is well catered for. All pupils learn to play musical instruments. Their confidence grows through performing in assemblies and school productions. Frequent trips and visitors complement this further. For example, pupils sing in church, watch a talent showcase and take part in an African drumming and storytelling workshop.

Typically, pupils are articulate and capable of achieving highly. However, the school's curriculum, and the training around it, are underdeveloped. This is hindering pupils' achievement. Sometimes, it means pupils complete work that is too easy, despite them being ready to learn and rehearse what they should study next.

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

The pace of change around curriculum development, including in the early years, is too slow. For some subjects, limited specificity in the curriculum makes it hard for staff to know what precisely to teach. It shows in staff sometimes arranging activities that lack purpose or being unclear about what they should do or say to help further pupils' understanding.

How staff make and use assessments to inform teaching varies in its effectiveness. When it is done well, staff notice pupils' mistakes and give clear explanations that help pupils make corrections. However, there are some wider issues that the school is aware of, yet these are not being tackled effectively. For example, too many older pupils read slowly and without fluency or expression. This affects how well they understand the text read. However, there are no shared approaches to resolve this. Consequently, staff either skim over it or arrange unhelpful activities that do not teach pupils how to change their voice in line with the text being read.

Leaders' monitoring of the curriculum and wider school systems is not strategic enough. Too often, it focuses on style of delivery as opposed to uncovering what is stopping pupils from achieving their very best. For example, when some pupils underperformed in tests, leaders elected to change the test used rather than investigate what might need addressing through curriculum design and staff training to maximise learning in the classroom. Consequently, some staff are insufficiently skilled to support pupils' learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) experience the same variable quality of teaching. Still, the school works alongside parents to identify and source support for pupils with SEND. Staff then liaise appropriately with external agencies to determine what strategies might be best for addressing barriers to learning.

Most of the time, pupils' behaviour is pleasant and polite. Children in the early years grow in confidence, owing to staff's warmth and encouragement. Pupils like how collecting house points contributes to the total for their house team. It helps pupils to see how behaving in a socially acceptable way benefits everyone. However, when work is not well matched to their needs, some pupils' attention wanes. They then become distracted, chatting with friends or fiddling with items.

Leaders and staff forge positive relationships with pupils and their parents. It acts as the catalyst for ensuring pupils' attendance remains high. There are positive relationships also between leaders and staff. Though staff, particularly those who have curriculum responsibilities, require more direction to fulfil their roles confidently and well, they recognise how leaders treat them respectfully. This ensures a happy workforce.

There are notable strengths in how leaders compile the personal development programme, particularly the broad set of cultural experiences on offer to pupils. A school trip to France, for example, allows pupils to put into practice the French they learn in school. Through the curriculum, pupils receive care and attention and are encouraged to share their worries. The regular 'circle times' or being asked 'Ça va?' in French lessons encourages pupils to share their feelings. However, high-quality pastoral support is lacking. Subsequently, for the pupils needing it, parents often arrange this out of school.

The school complies with the independent school standards (the standards), the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage and its duties under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is disparity in how the standards are checked to ensure all aspects of school provision are as strong as should be. Fire safety, for example, involves engaging experts to evaluate documentation and procedures. The regularity of this allows the school to rectify any issues fast, ensuring adherence to relevant regulations. The same cannot be said about the frequency and thoroughness of checks done on the quality of education and safeguarding. However, the systematic approach to ensuring compliance in most areas provides assurance that the proprietor body has the capacity to bring about improvements to the curriculum, teaching and safeguarding.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Some aspects of leaders' approaches to safeguarding lack insight. This leads to difficulties in reflecting on ways to strengthen safeguarding approaches. For

example, leaders did not realise the possible consequences of records being kept in different places and the fact staff do not always record concerns in line with school policy. Also, leaders' disinclination to seek wider expertise has led to limited support for pupils' well-being.

There were minor administrative errors on the single central record. Though these were put right during inspection, it showed leaders were unclear about the checks needing to be completed on staff.

Ultimately, these issues exist because the school's approach to evaluating safeguarding to identify and address issues lacks the rigour that exists for other areas such as health and safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school is developing its curriculum. For some subjects, there is a lack of clarity about what pupils should learn. This makes it harder for staff to plan learning opportunities that build on what pupils know and prepare them for what will come next. For those subjects in development, leaders should specify the words, concepts and skills pupils learn from the pre-school to Year 6 to facilitate staff in building pupils' understanding sequentially.
- Staff can mostly identify what a pupil knows or what is holding them back, but they are not efficiently using this information to inform their teaching. It means that pupils sometimes complete work that is not well matched to their needs or that pupils' barriers to learning take longer to resolve than they should. The school should provide training and support so that staff understand how to use their checks of pupils' learning to better inform their teaching and provide sufficient ambition for every pupil.
- How leaders check the teaching of the curriculum lacks focus and frequency. Consequently, staff are unclear about what to teach and how best to teach it, so pupils are not achieving as well as they could. Leaders at all levels should receive training and guidance to identify and put right the issues that hinder pupils' achievement across the curriculum.
- A lack of expertise is leading to minor weaknesses in the school's approach to safeguarding, including the reporting and recording procedures, pastoral support offer and the checks completed and recorded for adults working in the school. The proprietor body should arrange training and support to ensure the school's safeguarding procedures align with statutory guidance and the school's policy.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	117662
DfE registration number	919/6236
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10286386
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Longwood School and Nursery Ltd
Headteacher	Claire May
Annual fees (day pupils)	From £9,315
Telephone number	01923 253715
Website	www.longwoodschool.co.uk
Email address	info@longwoodschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 to 20 June 2019

Information about this school

- Longwood School is a small independent primary school. It has a separately registered and inspected Nursery that provides part- and full-time places for children aged three months to three years old. Currently, there are 90 pupils on the school roll and a further 96 children in the separate Nursery.
- In the school, there are three classes for the early years, and three mixed-age classes comprising: Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6.
- The school offers childcare before school, after school and during the school holidays. This is run by school staff and managed by school leaders.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school's last full standard inspection was in June 2019. It met all the standards and the school's overall effectiveness was judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- 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.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and director.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and French. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, 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 lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils reading to a familiar adult and looked at some of their reading records.
- To further inspect the curriculum, inspectors reviewed curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects and the areas of learning in the early years.
- 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.

- Inspectors carried out an in-depth tour of the school and checked the school's compliance with the standards by speaking to leaders and reviewing available evidence.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including policies, the self-evaluation form and the school improvement plan.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors held discussions with many of them and reviewed the 17 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. The inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during social times.
- To gather parents' views, an inspector spoke to parents at the start of a school day. Inspectors also took account of the 11 responses, including nine free-text responses, to the survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- To gather staff's views, inspectors held discussions with several of them and considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The Year 3 and 4 and Year 5 and 6 classes were out of school on an educational trip for the first day of inspection. The Year 1 and 2 class was out of school on an educational trip for the second day of inspection.

Inspection team

Daniel Short, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sara Boyce

His Majesty's Inspector

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