

Inspection of an outstanding school: Lady Zia Wernher School

Stopsley site, Ashcroft Road, Stopsley, Luton, Bedfordshire LU2 9AY
Legrave site, Strangers Way, Legrave, Luton, Bedfordshire LU4 9ND

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 November 2023

Outcome

Lady Zia Wernher School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Lady Zia Wernher School looks after its pupils exceptionally well. Each day, pupils are warmly welcomed into the school community. Pupils make friends and get along with each other very well. They happily settle into school life because adults have an excellent understanding of pupils' complex and varied needs.

Pupils experience a curriculum that enhances their lives. A rigorous focus on promoting communication and emotional knowledge gives pupils a 'voice' when they may not previously have had one. Pupils get the additional help they need because the school works closely with families and external agencies. Pupils' learning and well-being are at the heart of the school's work.

Well-trained staff have an in-depth understanding of pupils' backgrounds and sensory needs. Lessons are stimulating and purposeful. Staff know what motivates and engages pupils. Staff detect quickly if pupils need any extra help or support. Consequently, pupils show kindness to others.

A wide variety of additional experiences complement pupils' learning in the classroom. Learning is brought to life with trips and external visitors, such as the fire brigade. Pupils meet trusted adults and services. Pupils' different cultures and religions are celebrated. They enjoy inclusive activities, such as archery, horse riding and swimming.

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

The well-sequenced, ambitious curriculum supports pupils with very complex needs exceptionally well. The school continually evaluates the effectiveness of the curriculum. This means that the curriculum is regularly adapted to the varied and growing needs of the pupils who attend the school.

From the early years upwards, each area of the curriculum contains the important knowledge that pupils need. This supports pupils to communicate, to manage their emotions and to learn about the world around them. The knowledge is broken down into small, achievable steps linked closely to pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Highly trained staff expertly build on pupils' knowledge. Staff know the detailed information in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. They choose activities that make a positive difference to pupils' learning. Every opportunity is used to help pupils grow their understanding of themselves and the world around them.

Pupils join the school at different points of their lives. Regular checks on learning ensure that staff know exactly what pupils already know and how pupils are progressing through the curriculum. Additionally, this helps the school know which parts of their curriculum are working well and what other areas could be refined.

A high priority is placed on developing pupils' communication skills. Staff know and use a range of techniques to support pupils to talk and express how they feel. Pupils join in known rhymes and songs. Teachers often read to pupils. Books and stories are made accessible and feature prominently throughout the curriculum. Those who are able, are taught to read well. Adults successfully build pupils' phonics knowledge.

The school's close work with other teams and agencies ensures pupils are well cared for. The school's family support team forges strong links with families. Families receive support and training to help their children continue to learn at home. The school recognises that many pupils' medical issues mean they often miss education. Appropriate home learning and outreach help pupils until they can return to school. Leaders do all they can to improve pupils' attendance, despite the adversity many pupils face.

Supporting pupils and children with their emotions and behaviours is an essential part of the curriculum. The school ensures all staff access high-quality training. This means staff know the most effective approaches to help pupils with very complex needs. Staff know the pupils very well. They treat pupils with patience and respect. Staff spot signs that may indicate if a pupil is struggling or needs further support. This helps pupils to remain focused and engaged in their learning. As a result, pupils' behaviour is very well managed.

The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum contains important topics adapted to pupils' age and understanding. This includes lessons covering keeping healthy, oral hygiene and self-care. These lessons are taught in a sensitive, relevant way. This supports pupils well with their independence and readiness for their next steps.

The school staff are a united team, working in the best interests of the young people who attend their setting. High-quality training supports staff to use effective practices in the classroom. Thoughtful, regularly reviewed processes do not add to staff workload. Staff can concentrate on what matters most and this makes a difference to the pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in October 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](#)' 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	109745
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10294926
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jim Horsted
Headteacher	Hilary Davies
Website	www.ladyziawernherschool.com
Date of previous inspection	5 July 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is split over two sites. The new site opened in September 2023.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.
- Nearly all pupils have an EHC plan. The school provides specialist education for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and autism. Some pupils have multiple needs.
- Many pupils join the school at different points in their school life.

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.
- Due to the nature of the specialist curriculum, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following areas: communication and language (including reading), mathematics, and personal, social and emotional development. In each area, inspectors met with leaders,

visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils and looked at evidence of pupils' work.

- Additionally, the lead inspector considered the PSHE curriculum and visited a range of lessons in other subject areas, including music, art and PSHE.
- Inspectors scrutinised EHC plans for pupils across different classes. Inspectors considered the impact of the school's work through examining case studies of different pupils.
- The lead inspector held a telephone call with a representative from the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 spoke with pupils across both days of inspection.
- The lead inspector considered the three responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including two free-text responses. The lead inspector spoke to a range of parents at the beginning of the school day. In addition, the lead inspector considered correspondence, including phone calls and e-mails, from several parents.
- The lead inspector also considered the 28 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and the 78 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Suzanne Thrower

Ofsted Inspector

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