

Inspection of Leigh Academy Rainham

Otterham Quay Lane, Rainham, Gillingham, Kent ME8 8GS

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 February 2024

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

The principal of this school is Alex Millward. The school is part of Leigh Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by chief executive officer, Simon Beamish, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Frank Green. There is also an Academies Director, Emma Elwin, who is responsible for this school and 12 others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils know that the school wants them to be the best they can be. They appreciate that staff have high expectations of them, which pupils rise to very well. The curriculum is interesting and ambitious. Pupils respond positively to their learning, working with focus, independence and resilience.

Pupils treat each other and adults with respect. Kind, caring staff make sure that pupils are very clear on how to behave well. As a result, lessons are hardly ever disrupted. The school is very calm and orderly. Pupils behave maturely, with high levels of self-control.

The school puts pupils' welfare and well-being at the forefront of its work. Pupils are taught about staying healthy, managing risk and healthy relationships. They are well-prepared for growing towards adulthood. Pupils feel confident to seek support should they need it.

The school offers an extensive and very well considered personal development curriculum. The school values of 'dream, believe, achieve' underpin school life. Pupils are strongly encouraged to attend a wide range of clubs and activities, including many sports, music and debating. As part of the enrichment programme, pupils visit historical sites, theatres and foreign countries. These activities help turn classroom learning into reality. Pupils develop their character well through activities such as fundraising and the Duke of Edinburgh award.

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

The school has thought carefully about how it has designed the curriculum. It has ensured that pupils are taught interesting, relevant knowledge in each subject. Well-considered links are made between subjects which help root learning in reality. For example, when studying *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in English, pupils also learn about set design and planning a production. The school's ambition continues as pupils move into key stage 4, where high proportions will study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects next year.

The school has identified the important knowledge that pupils need to know in each subject and has made sure that it is logically sequenced. Pupils build up their knowledge well over time. Pupils are encouraged to read widely and often. The school is becoming increasingly effective in supporting pupils who struggle to read to gain fluency and confidence.

The school supports the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. Staff have strong subject expertise, but a small number do not always use the most effective strategies when delivering learning. This means a few pupils do not learn as well as they could. Broadly speaking, teachers ask well-chosen questions to check what pupils have learned. In this way,

staff adapt their teaching to ensure any misconceptions are addressed. Pupils make very good use of their individual devices for independent learning. Almost all pupils, including those with SEND, achieve well.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. The school sets out very clear, high expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves during lessons and around the school. Pupils understand the school's structured approach well, describing it as firm and fair. There is a culture of warm positivity. When staff need to remind pupils about behaviour, it is done with respect and care. During lessons, attentive pupils focus extremely well. They show tenacity and maturity in their learning. Pupils appreciate their teachers, understanding that calm, quiet classrooms help them to learn best.

Pupils are very safe here. Pastoral support is very strong and the school places a high focus on pupils' mental health. Pupils trust adults to help them. They know that the school provides various, helpful ways for them to report any concerns that they may have.

The school has designed a personal development curriculum that truly enriches pupils' wider experience. It makes sure that disadvantaged pupils, including those with SEND, benefit greatly from the programme. Pupils have opportunities to make a positive contribution to school life and to the wider community. They view roles such as student leaders and mentors to be important and valuable. Pupils receive timely information about careers and future pathways. The school has plans in place to further extend its already impressive careers guidance as pupils move into key stage 4. Pupils learn about different faiths, cultures and viewpoints. They are mature, empathic young people who readily accept difference. The school prepares them well for life in modern Britain and the wider world.

Leaders and those responsible for governance, work with drive and determination to continually improve pupils' educational experience. Aply supported by the trust, the school offers staff regular, high-quality training so that they can continue to improve in their roles. Staff are immensely proud to work here. They feel very well supported with their workload and well-being. Parents also endorse the work of the school, with increasingly high proportions recognising the benefits of the school's approach.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Due to different levels of experience, a few teachers use less effective pedagogical strategies. This means that a small number of pupils do not always learn as well as they could across all subjects. The school should continue to

provide high-quality training to ensure that all staff's pedagogical knowledge is equally effective.

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	148577
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10296541
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive (non-selective)
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	627
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Frank Green
CEO of the trust	Simon Beamish
Principal	Alexandra Millward
Website	leighacademyrainham.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of Leigh Academies Trust. The trust has 31 primary, secondary and special schools in the southeast.
- The school opened to Year 7 pupils in September 2021. It has taken on a new year group each year. Currently, there are pupils from Year 7 to 9 attending the school. When it is at full capacity, the school will educate pupils from Year 7 to Year 13.
- The principal has been in post since the school opened.
- The academy is an International Baccalaureate world school, offering the middle years programme at key stage 3.
- The school currently does not use any alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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. The 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 academy leaders, including the principal, vice principals, special educational needs coordinator and other subject leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the trust's chief executive office and academies director.
- The lead inspector met with two members of the local governing board and spoke to two trustees.
- Deep dives were carried out in these subjects: English, science, mathematics, modern foreign languages, history and performing arts. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked more widely at the curriculum offered.
- 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 safeguarding culture that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour and attendance, and the school's wider curriculum.
- Inspectors talked to pupils and staff throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. This included the views of pupils and staff submitted via Ofsted's confidential surveys.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted via email and the 167 responses via Ofsted's parent survey.

Inspection team

Maria Roberts, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Mike Boddington	Ofsted Inspector
Elaine Parkinson	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Simmonds	Ofsted Inspector

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