

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Lanchester Primary School

Hempstead Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD17 3HD

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 November 2024

Outcome

Lanchester Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Matthew Morey. This school is part of the Danes Educational Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Josephine Valentine, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Martin Day.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. A number of pupils join the school partway through their primary education. Because the school is a caring and friendly community, these pupils settle into school life well. Pupils embrace the school values of 'ready, respectful, resilient'. They show high levels of respect to staff and to each other. Pupils are confident about approaching staff if they are worried. They know that adults will help them.

The school is ambitious for what all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can achieve. Pupils live up to these expectations, applying themselves to their learning. They behave well. At social times, older pupils are keen to model the expectations around behaviour. Pupils, including younger children, play well together.

The newly formed junior leadership team enthusiastically represents all pupils in the school. Pupils in the team say that they are 'the voice for those pupils who don't yet have the confidence to speak out for themselves'. These young leaders develop their leadership skills through roles which help make the school a better place. For example, learning ambassadors support younger pupils with their writing and eco-councillors help to improve the school environment.

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

The school's curriculum clearly sets out what pupils will learn in each subject. This begins in Reception. The logical sequence of the curriculum helps pupils to build their knowledge over time.

Staff present new ideas clearly and give pupils the opportunity to practise their learning. For example, in the early years, a range of well-chosen activities help children to practise their counting and develop their knowledge of number. The curriculum is generally well delivered by staff. Teachers regularly check what pupils know and adapt their teaching to address any gaps in what pupils remember. Pupils learn, build and apply their knowledge well. That said, sometimes teachers do not choose the most effective learning approaches. Where this happens, pupils take longer to understand the information that is being taught. Pupils remain engaged in their learning and try to work things out for themselves. However, this hinders the progress pupils make across the curriculum.

There have been a number of recent leadership changes in the school. The school has acted quickly to strengthen the provision, for example supporting pupils with SEND. Pupils with SEND have their needs identified and assessed promptly. Staff use this information to make effective adaptations to their teaching and, in a few cases, where appropriate, to the curriculum. This helps pupils with SEND to learn well alongside their peers.

The school has established a love of reading. From the start of early years, children engage with high-quality texts and stories. All staff know how to teach the phonics programme. This helps to ensure consistency in teaching and provides a solid foundation for children. Pupils who fall behind receive targeted support to practise their sounds. This helps them to keep up with their knowledge of reading. Older pupils, including those pupils with SEND, talk enthusiastically about books and authors that they enjoy reading.

The school manages pupils' behaviour well. A recently introduced behaviour policy clearly sets out expectations of pupils and consequences for behaviour that fails to meet the expected standards. Positive behaviour is consistently rewarded by staff through individual recognition and the house system. Weekly assemblies celebrate those pupils who demonstrate the school values and expectations. This has helped to drive a significant reduction in behaviours that previously led to pupil suspensions.

While attendance is improving in the school, leaders are not complacent. They monitor attendance and punctuality closely. They use the information to work with families who need extra support. As a result, most pupils attend school regularly.

Pupils know that they are part of a diverse and inclusive school. They learn about different faiths and cultures through the curriculum and from each other. Pupils develop their skills to discuss and debate topics through a weekly question. They remember this learning well and talk about examples such as 'how to help someone with a food allergy' and 'coping better with extreme weather'. This prepares pupils well for life beyond school.

Leaders closely monitor the school's work and know the areas that they want to improve further. The school's interim action board (IAB) and trust know the school well. They provide the right balance of effective challenge and support. This is helping to drive rapid improvement in the school. Alongside these improvements, the school is highly considerate of staff workload and well-being. This means that the staff work well as a team to support improvement and are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teaching activities do not always help pupils to practise and secure the knowledge and skills they need. As a result, pupils' engagement with their learning is sometimes hampered. The school should ensure that teachers are provided with the expertise they need so that teaching activities build knowledge and skills consistently well across the curriculum.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in July 2019.

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	140954
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10345394
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	338
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martin Day
CEO of the trust	Josephine Valentine
Headteacher	Matthew Morey
Website	www.lanchester.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	9 and 10 July 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post in September 2024.
- The school joined the Danes Educational Trust in 2021.
- Governance of the school is currently overseen by an IAB. A new school board (local governing body) is currently being recruited and there will be transition to a local group during the current academic year.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.

- The inspector spoke with the headteacher and other leaders, along with a range of staff. Meetings were held with members of the IAB and representatives of the trust.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and wider development and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation and school transformation plan, policies, curriculum documents, behaviour and attendance records, and published outcomes.
- The views of parents and carers were gathered through the 74 responses and 58 free-text responses to Ofsted's Parent View. There were no responses to Ofsted's staff or Ofsted's pupil surveys. The inspector talked to a range of staff and pupils to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

Wayne Jarvis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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