Inspection of Leigh Academy Molehill

Hereford Road, Maidstone, Kent ME15 7ND

Inspection dates:	10 and 11 December 2024
The quality of education	**Outstanding**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Outstanding**
Personal development	**Outstanding**
Leadership and management	**Outstanding**
Early years provision	**Outstanding**
Previous inspection grade	Good

The principal of this school is Laura Smith. This school is part of the Leigh Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Simon Beamish, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Frank Green.

What is it like to attend this school?

An endless ambition shared by all staff ensures there are no limits to what pupils can accomplish. This starts in early years, where children develop a strong foundation that prepares them well for later learning. Pupils engage with a curriculum designed to ignite a passion for learning and knowing more. They take great pride in their work and are eloquent when talking about their learning. Dedicated and skilful staff remove barriers to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn well. As a result, all pupils are exceptionally well prepared for future learning and success.

A sense of calm and purposeful learning pervades the school. Pupils demonstrate high levels of respect for their peers and the school values. They are incredibly polite, try hard and are proud of their achievements. Behaviour is exemplary because staff are consistent with their high expectations.

Influential pupil leadership ensures that pupils' voices inform decisions about the school. Staff purposefully teach pupils important life skills, such as being open-minded. This means pupils articulate their views when debating big ideas such as 'Who are we?' One of

many pupils report that the school feels 'perfect for them', reflecting the high-quality care and support they receive.

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

The school's ambitious curriculum is highly effective in supporting pupils to learn well. Learning is carefully structured to build in a logical sequence across the whole curriculum in each year. Pupils regularly revisit important knowledge. This helps them to master important skills, such as multiplication in mathematics. The curriculum design supports pupils to apply knowledge in increasingly complex ways. Teachers use their expertise to help pupils in making connections between related concepts across different subjects. In art and design, for example, pupils learn how art can serve as a form of social commentary. Pupils apply knowledge from geography to make their 'Banksy' inspired stencil art, aiming to raise awareness about deforestation.

The school ensures all staff know how to identify and meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils with SEND who access the specialist resourced provision receive effective help to develop their communication skills. This enables these pupils to participate fully in lessons and school life. Disadvantaged pupils achieve exceptionally well in published outcomes.

Children in early years make excellent progress through the school's curriculum. They quickly develop the ability to pay attention for extended periods of time. Consequently, children engage with learning in more complex ways. Learning through play is meticulously designed to reinforce important skills, such as counting. Staff constantly review how well children are achieving important milestones. They plan responsively to address any gaps in learning. This enables children to be exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils read with impressive accuracy and confidence. A systematic approach to teaching phonics means that all pupils learn to read well. Targeted support is provided for those who need additional help. Teachers ensure that pupils understand what they are reading. This enables pupils to not only learn to read, but to read so they can access the curriculum. Reading from a rich range of ambitious texts is embedded as a daily practice throughout the whole school. This enables pupils to become fluent and competent readers.

Attendance is very strong, as pupils are eager not to miss out on learning. The school works sensitively with families to address and remove barriers to positive attendance. Pupils' conduct around school is exemplary. They show impeccable manners and greet adults with a cheery smile or a wave. Assemblies are jubilant times to celebrate achievements, such as listening to classmates play the guitar. Pupils report that instances of unkindness are so very rare as values such as respect are deeply embedded in the school's culture and ethos.

The school nurtures pupils' wider development extremely well. Pupils demonstrate resilience, viewing mistakes as an opportunity to persevere and try again. They feel important as staff give them meaningful opportunities to take on responsibilities, for

example through school leadership roles. A wide offer of clubs and trips extends pupils' learning outside of the classroom. Vibrant displays feature world maps that celebrate the rich cultural heritage of the pupils and their families. Culture Day brings pupils and their families together to celebrate each other's cultural traditions and food. Pupils have a deep respect for diversity and equality. This ensures pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders are unwavering in their commitment to the development of pupils and staff. Staff receive highly effective professional development to help them deliver the curriculum well. Leaders at all levels, including governors, have an accurate view of the school's work. They ensure a positive culture of challenge and support, ensuring that pupils receive the best possible education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are 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	138195
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10321955
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	313
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Frank Green
CEO of the trust	Simon Beamish
Principal	Laura Smith
Website	www.leighacademymolehill.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 June 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Leigh Academies Trust.
- The school is authorised as an International Baccalaureate World School and teaches the Primary Years Programme.
- The school is governed by the trust and by a local academy board with delegated powers.
- The school has specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND on site. There is provision for pupils with speech, language and communication needs and pupils with a hearing impairment.
- The school does not use any alternative provision currently.
- The school has nursery provision on site and operates a breakfast club provided by the school.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, other school leaders and teaching staff. The lead inspector also met with the chair of governors, a range of other members of the governing body and a representative from the board of trustees. The lead inspector also met with the chief executive officer of the trust and the academies director.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design, history and music. For each deep dive, the inspector 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. The lead inspector also listened to some pupils read aloud to familiar adults.
- 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.
- The lead inspector reviewed and scrutinised a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' plans for improving the school, minutes of governing body meetings and records of attendance and behaviour incidents.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, they spoke to pupils about their experiences of school life. Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Michelle Payne, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sara Wakefield	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Jackson	Ofsted Inspector

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