

Leigh Beck Junior School

Point Road, Canvey Island, Essex SS8 7TD

Inspection dates

9–10 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Pupils' attainment and progress have not improved sufficiently since the previous inspection. Literacy knowledge and skills are weak and progress in mathematics requires improvement.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is inadequate. Gaps have widened between their attainment and others nationally and within school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make inadequate progress.
- Teaching is not challenging enough for pupils of different abilities, especially those in Years 5 and Year 6.
- The teaching of reading, writing, vocabulary and spelling has been weak.
- In mathematics, pupils often complete large amounts of repetitive work, which prevents them from thoroughly applying their knowledge in new ways.
- Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. Pupils are not effectively guided to improve and avoid errors.
- Teachers introduce new work too quickly and before pupils have understood the skills they are developing, particularly in writing.
- Questioning is not used well to make pupils think deeply enough or to thoroughly explain their ideas.
- Teaching assistants are not given the guidance they need to provide effective support to pupils.
- The contribution of some subject leaders to school improvement is not yet effective. They do not use assessment information accurately when checking the quality of teaching, or when looking at pupils' work.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and senior leaders have brought about improvements to leadership and teaching which show the school has the capacity to improve.
- Governors hold the school to account for its performance and have focused the attention of leaders on more rapid improvement.
- Arrangements for the performance management of staff and improving teaching are now effective.
- Pupils' personal development, welfare and behaviour are good. Staff and governors ensure that this is a caring, safe and encouraging school. Attendance has improved. Despite inadequacies in teaching, pupils' attitudes towards learning are good.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength because the school helps them appreciate their value and role in a diverse and democratic United Kingdom.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Quickly improve the quality of teaching so that a high proportion is at least good and no inadequacies remain, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - teachers raise their expectations of what the pupils are capable of, so that lessons are sufficiently challenging
 - all teachers make accurate use of assessment information to plan activities which are well matched to the needs and abilities of different pupils
 - pupils are given enough time to secure their understanding of the knowledge and skills they are learning before they move on to a new subject or activity, especially in writing and other literacy work
 - questioning activities require pupils to think more carefully and explain their answers more thoroughly
 - pupils are guided to select work of the most appropriately challenging level when a choice is offered
 - teachers' marking and comments follow the school policy by clearly advising pupils on how to improve their learning or correct work, with all teachers checking that this happens
 - teachers' checks on the quality of pupils' work and understanding during lessons pay closer attention to the progress of pupils with the greatest need, including those who are disadvantaged.

- Quickly raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - the teaching of writing improves pupils' construction of accurate sentences and paragraphs
 - literacy lessons support pupils of all abilities to secure accurate spelling standards and a vocabulary appropriate for their age
 - pupils are always given reading books which are sufficiently challenging; and those with the lowest level of reading skills are supported to properly pronounce the sounds which words and letters make
 - mathematics activities allow pupils to quickly apply their knowledge and skills to higher-level work and problems, once their understanding is secure
 - teaching assistants are guided to help those pupils they support, including those who have special educational needs or disability, to improve the accuracy of their written work.

- Improve school leadership by ensuring that:
 - all leaders, and particularly those responsible for different subjects, evaluate the quality of teaching by taking into account the progress of pupils over time and acting on this information quickly, to make sure that identified weaknesses are addressed
 - improvements to the quality of assessment and teaching are made more rapidly, by providing effective support and professional development to subject leaders, particularly those who are new to leadership
 - all curriculum plans provide enough time for the thorough teaching of reading, writing and mathematics
 - assessment information about pupils is used accurately and quickly to target support for those who are falling behind in their learning, particularly the disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs or disability.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- In the period since the previous inspection, this school has faced significant challenges. Pupils' learning and the quality of teaching declined in 2014 and 2015. There have also been important changes in staffing. In the last year the headteacher and senior teachers have made key improvements, but the progress made by older pupils currently at the school has been held back by previous underachievement and weaknesses in teaching. Current leadership demonstrates strength but not all leaders are bringing about improvement quickly enough.
- Senior leaders are determined to improve the school. The headteacher and deputy have an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and have organised effective improvement plans which clearly set out what is to be done.
- The headteacher has firmly challenged underperformance at all levels of the school. He has developed the skills of new subject leaders who are increasingly accountable for raising the quality of teaching and improving pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility. He has also ensured that teaching staff, including those who are relatively new to the profession, understand what is required of them to ensure a good quality of education for the pupils.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of teaching quality from observing lessons and studying pupils' work. However, over time, some subject leaders have not recognised the impact of weak teaching on pupils' rates of progress and have not tackled subject issues with urgency. Consequently, pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 in particular have not been helped to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Some underachievement has also been concealed by the unreliable assessments made by teachers in the past. This prevented effective support being put in place for particular groups of pupils where needs should have been identified earlier, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability.
- The use of the pupil premium (additional government funding for supporting disadvantaged pupils) has not been effective. The progress and attainment of these pupils has fallen behind others nationally and those within school. This is because past arrangements to improve their achievement have been ineffective, including some weak teaching.
- The quality of middle leadership is inconsistent, in part because some subject leaders are relatively new to their roles and have not developed the skills to use assessment information accurately to challenge teachers to improve their planning, marking and work. Others lead their subjects well and are bringing about improvement.
- The improvement of teaching is now the top priority for the school. Working alongside experienced subject leaders, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have organised effective coaching and training which are accurately linked to meeting the needs of teachers and improving pupils' learning.
- Arrangements for managing and improving teachers' performance are effective. Senior leaders and governors ensure that targets are set which match the required quality of teaching and pupils' attainment targets. Pay awards are clearly linked to performance and teachers understand this.
- Despite the decline that has taken place in the quality of teaching, over time leaders have ensured that pupils' personal development, welfare and behaviour are still good. This is because of the consistent, high expectations set by teachers for working hard and treating each other with respect.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced in content and provides the potential for pupils to improve their reading, writing and mathematics skills through the work they are set in different subjects. However, planning is less effective. Pupils do not have sufficient time to practise their skills and make up for past underachievement. Senior and subject leaders have identified this and have changed the way the plans work for the future.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a significant strength across all of the school's work. Pupils are well supported to grow up into mature, caring and law-abiding citizens with an international view of the world. They show the deepest respect for each other and for people who may have different beliefs, abilities, religion or backgrounds. Pupils are also highly aware of the meaning of democracy and rule of law and they show respect and support for parliamentary government in the United Kingdom. Assemblies and day-to-day teaching provide memorable examples of how life has been improved by peaceful and legal methods, including the abolition of slavery, for example. Pupils are taught to think for themselves as British citizens and ask questions about their country and world, in order to achieve positive, democratic change.

- The use of the physical education and sports premium (additional government funding to increase the quality of sports education and pupil participation in sport) is effective. School leaders are able to explain how they have used the funding and its impact. Pupils enjoy sport and are now more active in clubs and teams than in the past.
- In the current academic year, the local authority has provided effective challenge and support to the school. The school improvement adviser has an accurate view of the school and asks searching questions which have helped leaders to reflect on and improve their work. In addition, the local authority has helped leaders to learn from effective practices at other local schools in order to improve teaching.
- Leaders, governors and teachers work closely in consultation with parents, who report that they find the school a welcoming, supportive, caring and approachable place. However, several parents also report concerns about the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have challenged leaders firmly to improve the school. They are hard-working, committed and closely involved in its work. They are suitably trained for most areas of their responsibilities. Regular visits and well-considered questions ensure that they are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school, particularly about the quality of teaching and current improvements made to pupils' progress. Governors ensure that they meet their statutory duties for safeguarding. They also ensure that staff pay awards are closely matched to improved performance.
 - Although governors are well informed about the school's use of additional government funding to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils, they have had less success in holding the school to account in this area of its work and accept that the use of the funding needs careful review.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff and governors pay close attention to this work and pupils report that they feel safe. Parents also report their confidence in the school to keep their children safe. Arrangements for checking that all staff and visitors are suitable to be employed or be among children are well organised. Access to the school is managed carefully. All members of staff and governors are suitably trained in child protection and safeguarding and this includes safeguarding children from potential radicalisation and extremism. Concerns about pupils' safety are acted on quickly and information is shared with the appropriate authorities.
- Inspectors recommend an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium.
- Inspectors recommend an external review of the effectiveness of governance at the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate because, despite recent improvements, it is not yet good enough to overcome the past underachievement of pupils currently in the school, particularly those in Year 5 and Year 6. In addition, while the quality of mathematics teaching has improved, there is still inadequate teaching in English.
- Particular weaknesses in teaching include lack of challenge and teachers' low expectations which are not well matched to the different abilities of pupils. This is linked to inadequate use of assessment to plan activities that build sequentially on pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in order to ensure that they make good progress. On the occasions when teachers prepare work with different levels of difficulty, pupils are not necessarily guided to choose those activities most suited to provide the right level of challenge.
- The most-able pupils are sometimes required to take part in activities which are too simple for them and which are intended to support those who are struggling with basic skills and knowledge. As a result, they make slow progress and do not get the exposure to work which would help them develop a deeper understanding of their subjects.
- Conversely, there are times when teachers do not pay enough attention to lower attaining pupils, including some who are disadvantaged, who often struggle with new work and fall further behind others in the class.
- Teachers' questioning does not support effective learning or promote pupils' speaking skills. Often, questions are too easy and do not require pupils to think very hard or use the vocabulary expected for their age. As a consequence, pupils have few opportunities to develop skills in explaining what they know and they restrict themselves to simple answers.
- Lesson time is not used well. In some lessons, activities which are easy for most pupils sometimes take too long. In other examples seen, and when attempting more complex tasks, pupils are not given enough time to practise their skills properly so they can write with confidence or solve challenging problems. Examples of poor use of time were observed in lessons including literacy, mathematics and religious education.

- The use of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning is not effective. Although teaching assistants help pupils to think about their work and what to do, pupils continue to make basic errors in writing and spelling which go uncorrected.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds made by letters and words) is not yet effective, particularly in helping those pupils who have made the least progress to sound out words. The teaching of reading skills is also limited by the books many pupils are provided with. Often they are not difficult enough to increase the range and depth of reading.
- The teaching of writing skills is not effective because teachers have not focused on some of the most basic needs of those pupils who find writing sentences and paragraphs challenging. Although the planned work is often suitable, pupils are moved on to new activities too quickly and do not have enough time to secure their learning.
- Teaching has not given sufficient attention to spelling skills and knowledge. Consequently, many pupils struggle with basic spelling and their knowledge of spelling rules has only recently started to improve. Some parents have expressed concern about this.
- Teachers do not mark work consistently and comments do not help pupils to understand how to improve their work or what they need to do in order to make further progress. In addition, checks are not made to see if pupils have corrected their work or acted on the advice given, as specified in the school's policy.
- In some mathematics lessons, activities are not planned for pupils to use and apply their knowledge to the highest level work they are capable of. Instead, they are set large amounts of work which are repetitive and often too easy. However, most mathematics teaching is improving. As a result, pupils' knowledge of number and their calculation skills are now more secure than they have been for some years, while recent work for the most-able pupils is suitable for their age and ability.
- Good teaching is also found in the school. When teaching is good, it is well planned and challenges pupils to think hard and use their knowledge thoroughly. Time is used effectively and pupils are not rushed to complete work. They are also asked demanding questions and are expected to explain their answers carefully. Consistently good teaching is found in history and Spanish.
- The best teaching is helping some of the older pupils recover from past underperformance. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson, pupils' writing skills improved quickly when they were shown powerful images of the slave trade to stimulate the use of higher level vocabulary. Similarly, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, effective questioning and patient explanation helped less confident pupils become very clear in their reasoning about the translation of shapes using complex coordinates and quadrants.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Despite a decline in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, leaders and teachers have maintained high expectations for pupils' attitudes to learning. Pupils remain committed to working hard and being successful. They enjoy learning and, as teaching improves, their confidence is increasing.
- Pupils are becoming more confident learners. For example, more pupils are electing to use dictionaries and thesauruses to develop their spelling accuracy and grow their vocabulary. They report that this is helping them to improve their standards in writing.
- In past work, some pupils did not respond to teachers' comments when the advice given was unclear or checks were not made on their work. However, pupils who have been given good advice have always acted on it and their work has improved.
- Pupils eagerly take up positions of responsibility and are proud to serve their school. They serve on the respected school council, as club leaders and as leaders in sport. Pupils take the work of the school council very seriously: council elections are keenly contested with lots of pupils wanting to be candidates. As a result, they are able to understand the workings of democracy and the way in which changes can take place. Teaching and assemblies also help them to understand the importance of democracy and peaceful change.
- The school prepares pupils well for living in modern Britain. Pupils are highly respectful of human rights, people who are different to them and those who hold different views or beliefs, including religious beliefs. They oppose all forms of racism, respect other cultures and are proud of their own heritage.
- As a result of effective advice from teachers, pupils are clearly aware of the risks involved when using technology including the internet and are able to explain how to use them safely.

- Pupils are aware of what types of food make a healthy diet and more are now taking part in sports than in the past. This is because of the work of teachers to promote a healthy lifestyle.
- Pupils report that bullying is rare at the school and they would have confidence in their teachers to tackle bullying if they reported it. Equally, pupils reported that they would be confident to report a personal problem to teachers in the knowledge that the school would act quickly to help them.
- Most parents agree the school is safe, caring and welcoming. A small minority of parents did not agree that bullying was addressed effectively. Inspectors were unable to find evidence to support this view.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good and they enjoy attending this school. They are extremely polite and welcoming to visitors.
- Pupils' attitudes are good across the school day. They are committed in lessons and try hard, even when teaching is not effective. They cooperate with one another and keep trying when work is hard or they experience difficulty.
- Pupils respect their teachers and conduct themselves well. When they move between classes they do so sensibly and quietly. In assemblies their behaviour is good and during breaktimes they play happily and enjoy themselves. At lunchtimes, their conduct when eating and using the dining hall is polite and sensible.
- Leaders, teachers and other adults employed by the school make sure they apply the behaviour policy consistently. Pupils are clear about the high expectations placed on them and know how they should behave towards one another and their teachers.
- Attendance has been improved, with the school being particularly successful in tackling pupils with higher rates of absenteeism in the past. Leaders, teachers and governors work hard with families to communicate the need for regular, punctual attendance. As a result, pupils' attendance is now above average.
- Exclusion levels have been reduced and no pupils have been excluded in the last year.
- Most parents agree that behaviour is good at the school.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Pupils enter school with starting points in literacy and mathematics which are broadly at or below those typical for their age. Leaders make careful use of several tests and assessments in the early stages of Year 3 in order to ensure that the school has an accurate starting point for all pupils.
- Taking account of the range of abilities on entry, pupils' progress has been inadequate and past underachievement has not yet been sufficiently addressed, particularly in writing and reading in Years 5 and Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils making expected progress fell in reading in 2014 and 2015 but improved in mathematics and writing. However, the proportions of pupils making more than expected progress remained below national results in all subjects, especially writing, where the performance of pupils was particularly weak.
- The standards reached by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics have been below average. Pupils' attainment rose in mathematics in 2015 and continues to improve for those pupils currently at the school.
- Assessment information held by the school shows improvement in rates of progress of pupils in Year 3 and Year 4. There are also indications that pupils in Years 5 and Year 6 are beginning to make up for previous underachievement.
- The progress of pupils who enter the school with average or lower attainment has been much lower than similar pupils nationally. Rates of progress are quickening in mathematics but continue to be slow in writing and reading. Their reading has been held back by book choices which are too easy or their lack of confidence with phonics.
- The progress of the most-able pupils has also been much lower than similar pupils nationally. This is because they have not been able to achieve secure standards in writing, particularly when using paragraphs and applying a wider range of vocabulary. Reading standards have improved recently, because the books they are encouraged to read are more demanding and they enjoy the choice available. They are confident when giving their views about characters or offering an idea about the possible direction the story may take. In mathematics, their progress improved in 2015 and current pupils have recently started to tackle higher level work that is within their capability.

- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability do not make sufficient progress. The targets set for them have not been effective because they have not always been based on an accurate assessment of their starting points. This has meant that expectations for their achievement have not been high enough. The support provided for them in lessons often helps them to understand their work, but not all teachers pay enough attention to ensuring that they achieve as well as they can.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is inadequate. They have received additional help to improve this but they have underachieved compared to similar pupils. In 2014 and 2015, the proportion making the expected progress improved in writing and mathematics but fell back in reading. Very few exceeded the expected progress in writing or mathematics. The gap between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally and those within school widened to around four academic terms. Currently, disadvantaged pupils in Years 3 and Year 4 are making better progress compared to those in Years 5 and Year 6, where improvement has been slower.
- Pupils are making good progress in Spanish and their thinking and literacy skills are well developed in history.

School details

Unique reference number	115054
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10009139

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	347
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susannah Miles
Headteacher	Daren Partridge
Telephone number	01268 683037
Website	www.leighbeckjuniorschool.com
Email address	admin@leighbeck-jun.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 January 2014

Information about this school

- Leigh Beck Junior School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and all pupils speak English as a first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is average. This is additional funding for disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- There is a breakfast club at the school and which is under the management of the governing body.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- No pupils are educated off-site.
- Around one third of staff who were employed at the time of the previous inspection, including some leaders, have left and new staff have replaced them.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 32 lessons and part-lessons, six of which were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- School assemblies were visited on each day of the inspection.
- Inspectors studied work from pupils in each year group and listened to children read.
- Inspectors studied the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plans, policies, minutes from meetings of the governing body and the local authority adviser's reports.
- Meetings were held with leaders to discuss the school's own records about pupils' progress.
- The inspectors met with pupils from each year group and the school council, to discuss their views about the school.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the beginning of the first day and took into account the 47 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and the views of 27 staff who completed an Ofsted survey.
- The inspectors looked at other school documents and information, including leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, curriculum plans and behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors also looked at the school's arrangements for safeguarding and the performance management of staff.

Inspection team

David Turner, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Rowena Simmonds	Ofsted Inspector
Howard Lay	Ofsted Inspector

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