

Longmeadow Primary School

Oaks Cross, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG2 8LT

Inspection dates	6–7 July 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has provided highly effective leadership over the past 12 months, which has led to significant improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, pupils' progress is improving across most subject areas.
- Teachers encourage pupils to work hard and achieve as well as they can. Pupils respond well to the high expectations that teachers set. They show an eagerness to improve their learning and regularly use the good feedback that teachers provide to improve their work.
- Although progress across key stage 2 has been weak over recent years, inspectors saw evidence of significant improvements, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Provisional results, for the key stage 2 tests, show that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is likely to be above the national average in 2016.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Many children start at the school with skills and abilities which are well below those typically found. Children make good progress and are well prepared for Year 1.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Pupils quickly develop good early reading skills and, by the time they reach key stage 2, many are reading widely and often.
- The school ensures that disadvantaged pupils make good progress. As a result, by the end of Year 6 the gap in attainment, between them and other pupils, is narrowing.
- Pupils are well cared for and their spiritual, moral social and cultural development is promoted effectively.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers plan lessons effectively to meet the needs of the most able pupils. As a result, these pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Overall, absence rates are too high.
- In the early years, staff do not always use assessment well enough to ensure that every child undertakes highly challenging activities and makes rapid progress.
- Systems for checking on the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are not sufficiently rigorous.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve assessment in the early years so that children are provided with more activities which challenge them and help them to make more rapid progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that all teachers provide the most able pupils with challenging work in all subjects.
- Ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make better progress so that it matches more closely that of other pupils nationally.
- Improve attendance and reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher's highly effective leadership has led to a transformation at the school over the past 12 months. Her commitment to continuous improvement, and her refusal to accept mediocrity, has impacted positively on all aspects of school life. Self-evaluation is accurate and good plans are in place to address the few weaknesses that remain.
- The systems that the headteacher has put in place to evaluate standards have helped to secure significant improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. For example, leaders meet each half term with teachers to review and discuss pupils' progress. They carefully consider what barriers there are to pupils' learning and, where necessary, provide additional support so that pupils are not left behind in their work.
- School leaders use appraisal effectively to improve teaching. Regular scrutiny of pupils' work, and direct observations of teaching have helped leaders, including governors, to understand where teaching is most effective and where weaknesses remain. Rigorous action has been taken to challenge weak teaching. As a result, most teaching is now strong and, where it is not, there are strategies in place to ensure that it improves rapidly.
- Teachers value the training opportunities and professional support that is provided by school leaders. In-school coaching is helping to improve the quality of teaching, and involvement in the local network of schools is helping to support effective assessment practices and ensure that teacher assessments are accurate. Local authority training courses are also valued highly. Teachers feel that the training and development opportunities provided have had a positive impact on both teaching and pupils' learning. All members of staff who were working at the school at the time of the last inspection believe that it has improved since then.
- The school provides good opportunities for pupils to learn across a wide range of subjects. In science, geography and history, teachers have the same high expectations as they do in English and mathematics lessons. This is reflected in the work seen in pupils' books, which was of high quality. The curriculum also contributes well to pupils' behaviour and welfare as they learn the importance of tolerance and respect.
- Subject leadership is improving. Strategies such as weekly 'book looks', during staff meetings, are helping middle leaders to gain a comprehensive understanding of standards across the school. Staff are given regular time out of class to monitor their subject areas. As a result, senior leaders have an increasingly well-informed view of the school's strengths and the areas that are in need of further improvement.
- Over the past 12 months, school leaders have focused closely on the performance of disadvantaged pupils when reviewing the work of the school. They check on the impact of the additional support that these pupils receive so that successes can be identified and built upon. For example, specific reference is made to these pupils in the discussions that school leaders have with teachers during pupil progress meetings. Gaps between these pupils and others are closing rapidly.
- Leaders have used the additional sports funding effectively. It has been used to fund membership of the Stevenage Sporting Futures, which provides access to inter-school sporting events and also training for staff. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of how sporting activities contribute to healthy living.
- Staff at Longmeadow have developed a safe and caring school community. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is well catered for. Pupils understand what is meant by British values. A different values theme is chosen each half-term. For example, at the time of this inspection the focus was on tolerance. A recent assembly had addressed the issue of racism, following incidents that occurred after the EU referendum. There is an active school council, elected by pupils, that meets with staff to discuss whole-school issues. Pupils on the council regularly lead assemblies to discuss matters that have been raised by pupils.
- Although many parents expressed some dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the school, the majority believe that the school is well led and managed and would recommend it to other parents.
- The local authority has provided highly effective support to the school over the past year. As well as providing training opportunities for teachers and middle leaders, it has also ensured a good level of challenge to senior leaders, and helped to ensure that the governing body has the necessary skills and abilities to provide strategic direction to the school.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors bring a wide range of skills and experience to their role. For example, the chair of the governing body is a national leader of governance. They understand their role in holding school leaders to account and have provided good levels of challenge and support to the headteacher over the past 12 months. Governors regularly receive high-quality information about how well the school is doing from the headteacher and other leaders. They use this to check that progress is being made against the school's priorities.
 - Governors receive helpful information about how well groups of pupils are doing. They ensure that there is a clear link between teacher performance and pay and check that additional funding received for disadvantaged pupils, and for sports activities, is spent appropriately.
 - Governors are aware that further improvements are needed at the school. They have recently undertaken a comprehensive review of parental views of the school, which identified some of the concerns that have been highlighted by this inspection. Governors demonstrated the capacity and commitment to ensure that the necessary improvements will be made. They share the headteacher's high aspirations for the school to improve further.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Rigorous checks are made on those who work in the school to ensure that they have appropriate qualifications and skills and are cleared to work with children. Staff are appropriately trained and understand their responsibilities for ensuring pupils' safety. The school works in close cooperation with parents and external agencies to ensure that pupils get the right support in a timely manner.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching has improved significantly over the past 12 months. The headteacher has made clear her expectations with regard to the planning and assessment of pupils' work. Effective training and support have been provided for teachers. As a result, teaching is now typically good, pupils are making better progress and achievement is improving.
- Classrooms provide purposeful learning areas that are organised well to support pupils' development. Vibrant displays of pupils' work reflect the wide range of topics being studied and the high standards that pupils are capable of achieving. In each classroom there is an area dedicated to mathematics with attractive resources to support learning. A recent initiative is the 'estimation station', which provides pupils with a new challenge every couple of weeks. At the time of the inspection the challenge was to estimate the number of tables in the school. The pupil who makes the closest estimate wins a 'maths monkey' toy.
- Teaching in mathematics has improved significantly this year. Pupils are now given regular opportunities to use their mathematical knowledge and understanding to investigate and solve problems. This is encouraging a deeper understanding of how mathematics works. The work in books shows that, across the school, rates of progress in mathematics are improving. Provisional results, at the end of Year 6, show that attainment is above the national average.
- There has been a strong and successful focus on improving the teaching of writing this year. As a result, standards are improving across the school. Pupils have regular opportunities to write at length, in English and in other subjects. The work seen in pupils' books, and in displays across the school, showcase the improvements. Better rates of progress are also reflected in the provisional results for Year 6 pupils, which are above the national average.
- Reading is taught effectively. In the early years and key stage 1, children develop a good understanding of phonics (the link between sounds and letters). They use this knowledge regularly to develop their reading and writing skills and make good progress in their understanding of how literacy works. An inspector saw a lesson in the Reception class in which a child asked why there was an apostrophe in the word, 'I'm'. Another child replied, 'That's because we've joined two words together and shortened them.'
- Older pupils develop good attitudes to reading. Many read widely and regularly. The provisional results for the Year 6 tests in 2016 show that the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level is above the national average.
- Teachers are increasingly effective in using assessment to ensure that the work that they set for pupils provides the right level of challenge. However, the work that is set for the most able pupils is too often lacking in challenge. Greater challenge is provided in mathematics but, in other subjects, the most able pupils are not stretched to achieve what they are capable of.

- Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Many are highly skilled and play an active role in lessons, working alongside teachers, often with pupils who are in greatest need.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy attending school. They quickly learn routines and develop good relationships with other pupils. They are well supported by the adults who teach them and quickly develop confidence and good attitudes to learning.
- The school provides a nurturing environment for its pupils. The quality of care, guidance and support, coupled with the school's broad curriculum, ensures that good provision is made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- An inspector spoke to a group of Year 6 pupils about behaviour in general and bullying in particular. These pupils said that bullying is rare and that incidents are dealt with effectively by staff. Nevertheless, school leaders are aware that some parents feel differently about this issue. They are planning to work with parents and pupils on an anti-bullying charter during the next school year in order to improve both perceptions and practice.
- Pupils said that they regularly get clear messages about how to stay safe when using the internet. There are designated e-safety leaders in each class. They are trained to provide guidance and help about safe use of the internet to other pupils.
- The majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that their children are happy in school, well looked after and safe while they are there. Pupils also said that they feel safe in school.

Behaviour

- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are polite, friendly and respectful towards each other and the adults who teach them.
- Inspectors found that pupils typically behave well. Inspectors found nothing to support the views of those parents who expressed concerns about behaviour at the school. Some pupils do occasionally misbehave but incidents are recorded and dealt with effectively by staff, so that learning is rarely disrupted.
- Pupils have extremely positive attitudes to learning and work hard in lessons. Their work in books is almost always neatly presented and the quality of handwriting has improved significantly this year.
- Pupils take great pride in their school. This is reflected in the attractive displays around the school, in classrooms and in corridors. The work on display, which includes art, mathematics and numerous examples of pupils' writing, clearly gives the impression that this is a good school where pupils achieve well.
- Behaviour around the school is typically calm and purposeful. Pupils told inspectors that there is hardly ever any disruption in lessons and when there is teachers soon 'sort things out'.
- Although there has been a slight increase in attendance this year it remains below the national average and too many pupils are absent on a regular basis.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils' outcomes in subjects across the curriculum, including reading, writing and mathematics, are improving quickly. A combination of higher expectations, better planning and improved use of marking and assessment has led to improved standards this year. In classes where progress is not as strong, school leaders are taking effective action to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the standard in the Year 1 phonics check was around the national average in 2015. However, leaders have improved the teaching of early reading, paying closer attention to the monitoring of progress, and providing additional support to those pupils who were in danger of falling behind. The results of the phonics check this year will be above the national average. Pupils who failed to pass the phonics check in the past are well supported in Years 2 and 3, and most are making good progress with their reading.

- In 2015, outcomes at the end of key stage 1 for reading, writing and mathematics were broadly in line with the national average. This year progress has not been as strong in all classes. School leaders are aware of the drop in standards and are taking action to improve matters.
- There has been a strong and effective focus on improving pupils' progress across key stage 2. The work seen in pupils' books shows that progress is accelerating across year groups and across subjects. Provisional results for the end of key stage 2 show that attainment in 2016 is likely to be above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- There have been improvements to writing across the school. Evidence of this was seen not just in improved test results but also in the high quality of work in subjects such as science and history. Pupils take great care with their handwriting and present their work neatly.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are improving quickly as a result of a strong focus by school leaders on these pupils. In some classes, including the current Year 6, gaps in learning have closed and disadvantaged pupils' current outcomes are above those of their peers.
- The most able pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to extend their learning, except in mathematics lessons. Too often they have to complete work at lower levels before going on to more challenging tasks and so do not make the progress they are capable of.
- The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is generally slower than that made by their classmates. In the past, too little attention has been given to the impact of the support that is provided. School leaders are aware of this problem and have implemented changes to address the issue and improve the effectiveness of the school's provision for this group of pupils.

Early years provision

is good

- Most children start at the school with skills and abilities that are well below those typically found, particularly in communication and language development. During their time in the Nursery and Reception classes, children make at least typical progress, and many make progress that is better. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception class will be slightly below the national average this year. However, this represents good progress for most pupils, from their various starting points.
- Staff in the early years ensure that children have a broad experience in all areas of learning. Children are motivated by the wide range of activities which are made available each day, both indoors and in the large outdoor area, and are keen to learn. The learning environment is attractive, well organised and provides a safe place for children, who quickly learn and understand the school's routines.
- The school has developed very good relationships with parents. Early years staff visit children in their homes, or other pre-school settings, prior to them starting at the school in order to get to know about their interests. This helps children to settle in quickly once they start school. Staff ensure that parents are able to contribute to the initial assessments that are made of children's starting points on entry to the Nursery or Reception class. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress, which is recorded in children's 'learning journeys'. During this inspection many parents commented positively on the strong partnership that exists between home and school in the early years.
- Children make good progress in developing early reading and writing skills. Phonics is taught effectively and children are encouraged to use their developing skills to read and write through a wide range of carefully planned activities during each day.
- Children in the early years, who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are supported well. Adults have clear plans in place and ensure that their needs are met.
- Regular observations are made of the activities that children engage with. These are used to record their progress over different areas of learning. However, assessment is not always used well enough to plan activities which challenge children to move on rapidly in their learning. This means that children do not always develop their skills and knowledge quickly enough.
- Safeguarding is effective. Children are happy and staff are caring and attentive. Children's behaviour is good and shows that they feel safe while in school. Good systems and routines have been established and children have good attitudes to learning. Children listen carefully to adults and to each other. During this inspection one child was overheard explaining the school's behaviour rules to her friend.

School details

Unique reference number	135083
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10011857

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	405
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kathy Dunnett
Interim headteacher	Anne Heywood
Telephone number	01438 351087
Website	www.longmeadow.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@longmeadow.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 April–1 May 2014

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The interim headteacher, referred to in this report as the headteacher, took up her post in September 2015.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, for whom the school receives additional government funding through the pupil premium, is well above average.
- The majority of pupils are White British, with a smaller proportion than average being from minority ethnic backgrounds or speaking English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is around the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards in 2015, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6. Provisional results for 2016 are above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 28 lessons. Four lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Inspectors also observed other aspects of the school's work, including an assembly.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and subject leaders for mathematics and English.
- The lead inspector spoke with four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with different groups of pupils to discuss their experience of school and behaviour. One inspector listened to pupils read, and discussed their attitudes to reading.
- Inspectors spoke with parents before school and scrutinised the 110 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They also considered 20 questionnaires completed by staff and 15 letters sent to them by parents.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation relating to the school's safeguarding arrangements, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection team

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