

# Leighton Academy

Minshull New Road, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 3PP

## Inspection dates

20–21 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- In recent years, there has been a decline in outcomes due to pupils not making good enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stages 1 and 2.
- Pupils' progress is not consistently good throughout the school or in a range of subjects.
- Governors do not effectively monitor the impact of leaders' actions in improving outcomes for the most able pupils.
- Outcomes in writing are low because pupils have insufficient opportunities to write in depth across a range of subjects.
- The roles of some middle leaders are at an early stage of development. Too much of the drive for improvement rests with senior leaders.
- Leaders have not improved teaching or pupils' outcomes well enough across the school to ensure that all pupils are sufficiently challenged in lessons.
- Pupils' learning in history and geography is inconsistent in quality.
- The quality of teaching is variable across the school. The most able pupils are not always challenged well enough to master the skills and knowledge they need.
- Pupils' understanding of British values, such as democracy, lack depth.

### The school has the following strengths

- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) is strong in the early years and in key stage 1.
- Quality leadership, teaching and a stimulating curriculum underpin good outcomes in the early years.
- The school's very caring and effective ethos promotes well pupils' good personal development, behaviour and welfare.
- Safeguarding is effective and pupils feel safe.
- The work completed on improving attendance has had a positive impact. Attendance is now close to the national average.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving. Leaders have strategies in place to accurately evaluate the use of additional funding.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the impact of leaders on pupils' outcomes, by:
  - developing the skills, knowledge and roles of middle leaders to enable them to make a greater impact on school improvement
  - increasing the rigour of the checks made by leaders on the quality of pupils' work in their books, particularly in subjects other than English and mathematics
  - ensuring that leaders, staff and governors are clear how success will be measured.
  - developing pupils' understanding of fundamental British values.
- Improve the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' outcomes, by:
  - making sure that learning for pupils is challenging and interesting, especially in geography and history lessons
  - deepening and extending the thinking and understanding of the most able pupils in key stages 1 and 2 across all subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders have not moved the school forward fast enough over the last three years. This showed in the dip in standards in 2016. In 2017, unvalidated test results indicate that there was some improvement in outcomes. However, pupils' progress in some subjects is still not good.
- The quality of education provided for pupils has not improved enough, despite senior leaders implementing new strategies to improve progress. Leaders do not pay enough attention to the impact of their actions and are too optimistic in their evaluation of the school's strengths.
- Priorities for improvement, agreed by leaders and governors, address the key issues facing the school. However, the improvements are quite recent and as yet not securely embedded. Leaders now check the work of staff more closely but they do not review the quality of pupils' work effectively enough across all subjects.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use and apply their mathematical and English skills across the curriculum. As a result, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- The role of middle leaders in school improvement is inconsistent. This is affecting the quality of the school's work in a range of subjects, including geography and history. However, staff have gained skills from recent training which have contributed to the improvements seen in the quality of teaching and learning in some subjects this year. In some subjects, such as design and technology and science, there is a clear plan to enhance the quality of pupils' learning.
- Although some areas of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are taught well, the lack of understanding of some aspects of British values means that pupils are not well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The headteacher has the support of staff to make the necessary improvements. She and her dedicated senior team have been successful in improving outcomes in mathematics and reading, in maintaining pupils' good personal development, behaviour and welfare and in improving overall attendance.
- The coordinator for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has a good overview of this aspect of the school's work. Extra funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well, particularly to employ additional teaching assistants.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Staff offer excellent care, guidance and support to vulnerable pupils and their families.
- The well thought out use of additional funding also contributes to improving the rate of progress of disadvantaged pupils. Additional physical education and sports funding is also spent well. Pupils enjoy the wide variety of sporting activities on offer and their participation rates are good.
- Leaders have established smooth transition arrangements as children move from the Nursery class into the Reception Year and from here into Year 1. Pupils at each of

these points manage the changes in provision well.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors have a range of skills, such as those gained from experience in education, which are useful to their roles. They challenge school leaders to improve pupils' outcomes. However, they do not look in detail at how leaders are measuring success. Consequently, they do not effectively monitor the impact of leaders' actions in improving outcomes for the most able pupils.
- Arrangements for monitoring the school's finance are appropriate.
- Governors have a good overview of the arrangements for managing the performance of staff, including that of the headteacher. They thoroughly review staff targets against clear evidence of performance.
- Governors are trained in the safer recruitment of staff and are fully aware of the safeguarding processes within the school.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders follow up any concerns with outside agencies as necessary. Records of safeguarding are maintained clearly and securely. Staff and leaders have adequate training in keeping pupils safe. Clear messages are shared with parents, for example through the school website, about child protection.
- Checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils are thorough. Careful records are kept of recruitment.
- Leaders work effectively with other professionals and agencies for the safety and welfare of pupils. They follow up on concerns if they are not satisfied with the response.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff are well trained so they are able to report any concerns promptly. They are vigilant and pupils feel comfortable in approaching staff with any concerns.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

## **Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching and learning is not consistently good because there is too much variation between classes and year groups. As a result, pupils' skills are not improving at a fast enough pace, particularly in writing, history and geography. This leads to groups of pupils making variable progress. Teaching in some classes has not improved quickly enough to help pupils to catch up and make the accelerated progress needed.
- The most able pupils do not have enough opportunities to access a wide range of increasingly challenging ideas in a range of subjects. The lack of challenge means that these pupils find their work too easy and uninspiring in some lessons. For example, opportunities for pupils, including the most able, to gain a deep understanding by using their mathematical skills to reason or solve problems are inconsistent in quality.

- In reading, although outcomes are improving there is still a lack of consistency in the quality of teaching different reading skills, especially for those pupils who do not read at home.
- Teachers' confidence and expertise in teaching writing are not secure. They provide opportunities to improve pupils' basic skills in spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting. However, there is no consistent approach to develop pupils' knowledge and skills in writing creatively and extensively across the curriculum.
- Assessment systems are used by teachers to inform planning and identify gaps in pupils' learning. However, more work is needed to ensure that activities are consistently well matched to pupils' skills and abilities to accelerate progress for most groups of pupils, particularly the most able.
- The teaching of science and design technology is a strength. However, the quality of pupils' work in history and geography is variable. Staff do not always plan activities which engage pupils' interest or are historically accurate.
- Teaching assistants play a valuable role in supporting pupils' learning across the school. Much of their subject knowledge has improved along with that of their teacher colleagues and is used carefully to prompt and question pupils. Support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who are disadvantaged, is enhanced by the skilled contribution of teaching assistants.
- The teaching of phonics is effective in the early years and key stage 1. Improved sharing of assessment information between the Nursery class and the Reception Year is also having a positive impact on children's phonics skills.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- There are few recorded incidents of bullying. Pupils agree that incidents of poor behaviour are rare and when they do occur, staff address the issues quickly and effectively. Pupils have complete confidence in the staff, especially the welfare team. In discussions, pupils stated that bullying is 'disappearing'.
- Leaders identify vulnerable pupils and provide effective support so they feel supported and safe. Leaders are proud of the nurture and support they provide for pupils and the positive impact this is having on pupils' well-being.
- Pupils appreciate each other's differences and have a good awareness of equality. They are respectful of each other's views. A typical comment was, 'Everyone is different in some way, but we need to be the same in kindness.'
- Pupils are proud to have responsibilities around the school. They are eager to talk about their roles as e-safety monitors, librarians and peer mediators.
- Pupils' attitudes are generally positive towards their learning. However, this is not always apparent in lessons where some pupils are not always engaged due to a lack of challenge.
- Pupils are considerate of the feelings of others and understand the consequences their

actions can have. However, they are not as clear on the role of law and democracy in being prepared to contribute to life in modern Britain.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' attendance continues to improve and is now close to the national average. This is the result of focused actions and initiatives. Leaders' persistence and belief in their ability to bring about change is praiseworthy.
- Overall, pupils behave well in class and around the school. The majority of pupils are very keen to learn and are eager to help each other. On a few occasions, pupils lose concentration when teaching does not challenge them. This slows pupils' learning.
- Pupils are friendly and engaging and their manners are impeccable. They are confident in engaging in discussions with visitors and are eager to share their positive views about the school.
- Around the school, at lunchtime and playtimes, pupils behave sensibly. There are few instances of poor behaviour and pupils are polite to each other. Behaviour records indicate there are few incidents of poor behaviour but these continue to decline.
- Pupils are aware of how to stay safe. There has been work within the curriculum on staying safe online, in which the e-safety pupil monitors are involved. Pupils are particularly proud to talk of their visits to local emergency services, in which they offered thanks to the personnel who work there.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- In recent years, standards have dropped and leaders have been too slow to tackle the decline. As a result, pupils are not making consistently good progress across the school.
- Pupils' outcomes at the end of each key stage have not been good in a number of areas. Although there has been some improvement in the achievement of pupils in key stage 1, assessments indicate that pupils are still not reaching typical standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress in writing in key stage 2 was also weak. The unvalidated key stage 2 results for 2017 show that disadvantaged pupils' progress was also below the progress of their peers.
- The most able pupils are not achieving as well as they should. Teaching is too often pitched at the same level for all pupils across all subjects. The work completed by the most able pupils, particularly in mathematics, geography and history, indicates that too few of this group of pupils are achieving high standards. In Year 2, only a small proportion of pupils were able to write at greater depth.
- The progress of pupils across the wider curriculum is inconsistent because of the variation in the quality of teaching and in teachers' subject knowledge. In subjects where there is specialist support, such as physical education and design and technology, progress is stronger than in other subjects.
- There are pockets of strong progress in some classes and some year groups, and pupils currently in the school are making better progress, for example in mathematics,

in some year groups. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching mean the picture is uneven between classes and subjects. Pupils' work shows that their progress is particularly variable in history and geography.

- Senior leaders are starting to use the pupil premium funding effectively and disadvantaged pupils are beginning to make better progress. The proportion of these pupils who are on track to meet the expected standards in English and mathematics has increased. However, it is less strong in a range of other subjects.
- Pupils' ability to use phonics to read words by the end of Year 1 is above average.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making strong progress. Those disadvantaged pupils who also have special educational needs and/or disabilities are also progressing strongly. This is because of the skilled support they receive from teaching assistants.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- Leaders within the early years have a good understanding of the strengths of provision. They have accurately identified weaknesses and have implemented strategies to raise children's attainment, especially for the most able. There are now effective activities in the outdoor provision for children to develop greater depth across all areas of learning.
- From developmental starting points that are lower than typically seen, children make strong progress. Leaders are lessening the differences in attainment between disadvantaged children and other children nationally. Teaching is successful in helping children to become able and confident learners. Teamwork among staff is well established, especially in regard to the teaching of phonics.
- Children's behaviour is good. Children enter the Nursery classes in a calm and orderly way. They choose activities and sustain interest in them. In the Reception classes, children move sensibly between the indoor and outdoor provision. Children interact well with each other and take turns.
- Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. Staff have strong links with other professionals, which are effective in improving outcomes for these children.
- The electronic tracking system captures learning activities and how children respond to additional guidance and support. Parents of children in the Nursery classes commented positively on the way this kept them informed of their children's daily learning. Parents also appreciate the range of workshops offered and the positive relationships with all staff in the early years.
- Effective transition arrangements mean children are ready for the next stage of their education and are able to settle into Year 1 very quickly. This is a result of the good communication between staff in different phases.
- Staff have a good understanding of child protection and safeguarding. Statutory welfare requirements are met and children feel safe.

## School details

Unique reference number	139752
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10032810

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	579
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mrs Helen Morris
Principal	Mrs Joanna Young
Telephone number	01270 685185
Website	<a href="http://www.leightonacademy.com">www.leightonacademy.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@leighton.cheshire.sch.uk">head@leighton.cheshire.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school is a larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school and made joint observations with the principal.
- Inspectors checked pupils' work in books to evaluate pupils' learning and progress since September 2016.
- Inspectors met a range of staff, including subject leaders, and evaluated all aspects of the school's work.
- Inspectors met with two members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in classrooms and outdoors. Inspectors spoke with a sample of 11 pupils from Years 4 to 6. They heard some pupils read.
- Inspectors spoke with some parents as they dropped off their children at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors conducted a range of activities to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding at the school. These included, a review of checks made by the school on the suitability of staff to work with pupils, sampling school records about staff recruitment, a review of child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures, discussions with staff and with pupils and a check on safeguarding files.
- Inspectors considered a range of information about the school. This included records of pupils' attainment and progress, attendance records and information published on the school's website.

## Inspection team

Simon Hunter, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tina Cleugh	Ofsted Inspector
Leszek Iwaskow	Ofsted Inspector
Adrian Martin	Ofsted Inspector
Joan Williamson	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

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