

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



10 June 2019

Mr Andrew Swainson
Headteacher
Leigham Primary School
Cockington Close
Leigham
Plymouth
Devon
PL6 8RF

Dear Mr Swainson

Short inspection of Leigham Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 May 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the predecessor school was judged to be good in April 2014. The school joined Connect Academy Trust (the trust) in September 2016.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in September 2017, you have established an effective senior leadership team which shares your high expectations.

Your self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate. Adults share your high aspirations for pupils. All staff who responded to Ofsted's survey said that they are proud to work at the school, feel well supported and that the school is led and managed well. Morale is high across the school. This view is echoed by all parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey. One parent told me, 'We absolutely love it here.' This reflected the views of nearly all parents who responded using the free-text service.

You have made sure that leadership is distributed well, and that middle leaders have a comprehensive understanding of their area of responsibility. They are empowered and determined to drive through further improvements. They clearly understand the priorities for their subject and play a strategic part in improving teaching. As a result, pupils' achievement continues to rise.

Pupils are proud of their school and love many aspects of school life. There is an air of calm around the school, where pupils have trust and respect for one another and adults alike. Pupils demonstrate a tolerance and maturity in their understanding that

not all pupils find school easy. One pupil told me, 'It is the best place because you can learn.' They told me how the curriculum stimulates their thinking and how learning is fun. Pupils in Year 4 were very eager to tell me about how a visit from a Roman soldier deepened their knowledge and understanding of life in the Roman era.

Governance is effective and is a strength of the school. Governors have an accurate overview of the school. Link governors meet with subject leaders regularly to provide an equal balance of support and challenge to specific areas of the curriculum. Further checks are conducted by the trust, who provide a termly health check to ensure that safeguarding is fit for purpose and that the strategic developments are taking shape. This helps validate leaders' own evaluations.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders and governors have ensured that the school's safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You make sure that staff and governors are well trained with the most current safeguarding information. Staff are up to date with the most recent guidance and are confident in taking the appropriate action should they have any concerns.

Pupils are adamant that they are safe in school. Pupils who spoke with me say that staff do all that they can to keep them safe. All pupils who responded to the pupil survey report that they feel safe in school. Pupils also say that there is no bullying in school and that staff quickly address any inappropriate behaviour. They have a secure knowledge of how to keep themselves safe online and how to respond to any threats to their safety. Pupils were also keen to share their work on how they have learned to stay safe outside of school through cycling proficiency. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, all agree that their children are safe.

Inspection findings

- My first focus in the inspection was about pupils' behaviour and disadvantaged pupils' attendance. Published figures for fixed-term exclusions show that for the last two years these are above the national average. This was also the case for disadvantaged pupils' attendance. I explored any possible correlation between exclusions and attendance. During the inspection, I found pupils' behaviour to be positive during lessons and in social time.
- Over time, the number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced and is now just above the national average. You record and monitor incidents thoroughly, looking for any patterns or trends, so that you can provide early intervention for any vulnerable pupils at risk of exclusion. You have introduced the 'Walker' room, a place where pupils who find managing their behaviour difficult can express themselves and receive good-quality pastoral support.
- Leaders, governors and your staff are deeply committed to equality of opportunity and use exclusion only as a last resort. An effective pastoral support team works closely with vulnerable pupils and external agencies. This is having a

positive impact on reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions. As a result, the school is a calm place, where pupils can learn effectively. Nevertheless, the number of fixed-term exclusions still remains above the national average.

- You have successfully created an effective system to monitor pupils' attendance. The pastoral team has a well-established system of support for families of pupils with low attendance. You have introduced a range of strategies to support good attendance, including weekly and termly rewards, home visits and attendance meetings. The educational welfare officer has also had a positive impact on improving pupils' attendance. As a result, current pupils' attendance figures are now in line with what is seen nationally. There is no correlation between pupils' absence rates and fixed-term exclusions.
- My second key line of enquiry focused on the teaching of phonics. In 2018, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check by the end of Year 1 dipped below the national average. You responded swiftly to the disappointing outcomes by reviewing the approach to the teaching of phonics. Together with your leader for phonics, who is accredited as a Plymouth leader of education for phonics, made strategic decisions to ensure that pupils acquire the necessary skills. Phonics is taught well, pupils are using phonics successfully to support the development of their early reading and writing. Current school information shows that more pupils are on track to achieve the expected standard in phonics at the end of this academic year.
- My third line of enquiry focused on the impact taken by school leaders to improve standards in reading and writing, particularly for disadvantaged pupils by the end of key stage 1. In 2018, the proportion of pupils who attained the age-related expectations fell below the national average.
- Leaders have focused on promoting reading and ensuring that it is central to the school's work. Pupils have access to books that are sufficiently challenging and, where appropriate, link to their work across the curriculum. This helps pupils develop their knowledge across a range of subjects.
- You have introduced a range of initiatives that motivate pupils to develop a love of reading. During the inspection, pupils told me how being a 'Rainbow Reader' inspires them to read regularly and often. In lessons, pupils listen carefully to teachers' explanations of reading strategies. Additional adults are deployed effectively to support pupils where pupils' reading skills are not as well-developed. Pupils I listened to reading did so fluently and with confidence. If they came across an unfamiliar word they used their understanding of phonics to help them. Current pupils are making strong progress with their reading.
- You and your leaders have implemented a range of actions to improve pupils' progress in writing. Your leaders responsible for English restructured the teaching sequence to enable pupils to have greater opportunities to write independently. Work in pupils' books shows that this is having an impact on improving pupils' fluency in writing. Pupils use a growing range of punctuation and sentence types to engage the reader. This makes their writing more interesting to read. Pupils' presentation and handwriting is of a high standard. This is because pupils are proud of their work. Writing in key stage 1 is of a high standard.

- My final line of enquiry looked closely at your work to improve the most able pupils' progress in writing across key stage 2. Pupils' skills using more complex styles of writing are not well enough developed. Pupils from low and average starting points are provided work that challenges them well. However, most-able pupils complete the same work, and this does not allow for them to deepen their understanding further. Most-able pupils who spoke with me during the inspection told me that they do not always feel challenged in their learning. One parent also reported that their child would like to be challenged further in lessons. Consequently, some of the most able pupils are not reaching their full potential. Leaders accept, however, that there is more to be done to ensure that the most able pupils and those with the potential to attain the higher standards achieve their very best in writing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- fixed-term exclusions continue to reduce
- recent work to improve the quality of teaching in writing continues so that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable, particularly the most able.

I am copying this letter to chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of Connect Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Plymouth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matt Middlemore
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior and middle leaders, and four members of the local governing body, including the chief executive officer. I considered the 52 responses to Parent View, including the free-text comments, and met with a group of parents at the start of the school day. I spoke with pupils formally and informally during the day. I also considered the 34 responses to the staff survey, and 18 responses to the pupil survey. We observed teaching and learning together and I listened to a sample of pupils read. Together, we looked at a range of pupils' work in exercise books. I scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the single central record, current performance information, your school self-evaluation and the most recent improvement plan.