

Inspection of a good school: Larkfield Primary School

Preston New Road, Southport, Merseyside PR9 8PA

Inspection dates:

3–4 March 2020

Outcome

Larkfield Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that one or more areas may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Larkfield Primary School are happy. The pupils that we spoke to said that they have lots of friends and that they feel safe. Staff and pupils are proud that the school helps everyone. Parents and carers recognise this too. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported around school. Despite this, some pupils, including pupils with SEND, do not achieve as well as they should in some subjects.

There are strong relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils enjoy playtimes and lunchtimes. Pupils said that bullying is rare. They are confident that if it did happen, staff would sort it out.

Pupils live up to staff's high expectations of their behaviour. Pupils' photographs of positive behaviour take pride of place in the corridors. Everyone understands and follows the school rules, such as walking on the left-hand side around the building.

Pupils take part in lots of clubs, sports activities and performances. They said how much they enjoy raising money for charity and helping to make their school even better. Unfortunately, too many pupils do not have these chances because they do not attend regularly. This also affects how well they achieve.

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

Published data shows that the previous curriculum did not help pupils to achieve well. For example, pupils made weak progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 in 2019.

Leaders and governors have started to take steps to improve the curriculum so that pupils' achievement improves. Leaders have identified what they want their pupils to know at certain points in their education. They have used this to plan a curriculum that aims to help pupils to learn things in an ordered way. However, these plans are still quite new and they have not had enough impact on pupils' learning.

Staff feel well supported through the changes that are being made. Leaders take account of staff's workload and well-being.

Leaders have recently made reading a high priority. They have made changes to the reading curriculum so that pupils learn things in the right order. Staff have had training so that they know how pupils learn to read.

Children in the early years enjoy listening to stories, books and poems. They start to learn about letters and the sounds that they make when they first enter the Reception class. Staff deliver the carefully planned phonics programme well. They act quickly if pupils need extra help to catch up. Books are well matched to the sounds that pupils know. As a result, most pupils reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check.

Reading is promoted well across the school. Leaders have made sure that pupils have access to lots of interesting books. They have carefully chosen class novels that support pupils' learning in other subjects. Pupils enjoy listening to their teachers read to them. This is helping to develop a love of reading.

Leaders have carefully organised and sequenced the curriculum in mathematics. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They plan work that builds on what most pupils already know and can do. Children in the Reception class enjoy activities that develop their understanding of number. As pupils get older, teachers make sure that pupils' mathematics knowledge and skills improve steadily. Pupils are starting to learn more as a result.

Leaders have made sure that pupils with SEND are supported well. They have access to the full curriculum and learn alongside their classmates. However, at times, pupils with SEND do not receive work that helps them to make progress through the mathematics curriculum.

The curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics has also improved. Pupils' learning is ordered logically so that pupils know more and remember more. In some subjects, such as history, pupils have many opportunities to go on exciting trips and visits, which brings their learning to life. Teachers plan activities that help pupils to understand how the past influences the present. Pupils told me about a wide range of topics. For example, they spoke about Neolithic settlements and the Treaty of Versailles being a cause of the Second World War. However, in delivering the new curriculum, staff do not check what pupils already know and can do. This means that they do not plan work that matches pupils' abilities or helps them to overcome any gaps in their knowledge. As a result, pupils are not always making the intended gains through the new curriculum.

Staff pride themselves on educating the whole child. Pupils respect difference and discuss moral issues in assemblies. They are polite and considerate. Pupils enjoy learning and behave well around the school. Pupils have many opportunities to take part in a wide range of sporting and cultural activities. They talk proudly about their achievements beyond the classroom.

In discussion with the headteacher, we agreed that reading and mathematics may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have had safer recruitment training. They make sure that all appropriate checks are carried out on the teachers and adults who work with pupils. Staff, throughout the school, are aware of different forms of abuse. They have received regular training in child protection. They know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil. Leaders make sure that pupils and their families get the support that they need quickly.

During the inspection, I found a number of concerns in relation to the school's safeguarding records and policies. In addition, information presented to parents on the school's website was incomplete and, in some cases, out of date. Leaders and governors made sure that these were addressed quickly. They now understand the importance of their roles and responsibilities in making sure that safeguarding policies and procedures are accurate and updated annually.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In 2019, pupils did not achieve as well as they should in reading by the end of key stage 2. This was because the previous curriculum was not effective. Recent changes to the reading curriculum have made sure that it is well planned and sequenced. Leaders should ensure that teachers put their recent training to good use and ensure that the new approaches to reading are fully implemented, so that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Although the mathematics curriculum has improved, it is not helping pupils with SEND to achieve as well as they should. This is because teachers are not adapting activities well enough to meet the learning needs of this group. Leaders need to support teachers so that they can plan work for pupils with SEND that helps them to know more and remember more.
- In some subjects other than English and mathematics, teachers do not always find out what pupils already know and can do before they introduce new learning. This does not help pupils to overcome existing gaps in their learning. Leaders should ensure that assessment is used more effectively to check pupils' learning so that they can make the progress they should through the planned curriculum.

- Pupils' attendance remains below the national average. This means that some pupils miss out on their learning. Leaders need to make sure that they work more closely with parents so that they understand the importance of their children's good attendance.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 3–4 February 2016.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	104887
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10111052
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	289
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andy Pratt
Headteacher	Julian Ward
Website	www.larkfieldprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 February 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- I met with the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders. I also spoke with class teachers and support staff.
- I met with several governors, including the chair of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- A range of documentation was reviewed. This included school policies and published information about pupils' performance.
- I met with the designated safeguarding leader to check the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures and processes. I also checked the single central record and checks made on newly appointed staff.
- I did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. This entailed discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, looking at examples of pupils' work, discussions with teachers, discussions with pupils and listening to pupils read.

- I also observed pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtimes, and as they moved around the school.
- I spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day and considered the 22 responses from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I also considered the 17 responses from the online staff survey and 55 responses from pupils.

Inspection team

Steve Kirkpatrick, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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