

Inspection of a good school: The Lacon Childe School

Love Lane, Cleobury Mortimer, Kidderminster, Worcestershire DY14 8PE

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 March 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils value the small, community nature of The Lacon Childe School. They say that positive relationships with staff and the additional opportunities they have brings the school's motto, 'Lacon Childe: more than just a school', to life.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils. They have made changes to the behaviour management system to make sure that pupils can meet these expectations. These are starting to have a good effect, and pupils say that their lessons are now seldom disrupted. When bullying happens, leaders deal with it well. Pupils say they have a trusted adult to speak to should they have any concerns.

Leaders have been working on developing the curriculum. However, this work is not yet consistent across the school, and this limits pupils' ability to do as well as they could.

There is an extensive range of wider opportunities for all pupils to explore their talents and interests. Alongside sports and drama and music activities, pupils are encouraged to join lunch or after-school clubs in areas such as crochet, reading, fantasy games, art and chess. Pupils value the contributions they make to the community, such as fundraising, supporting the local foodbank and working with older residents.

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

The headteacher is new in post. He has quickly identified the areas of the school that need improving and started to tackle these. Staff value the clarity he has brought to their

work, and they are committed to making sure the school is the best it can be. However, this work is new and has not yet had the time to have the impact that leaders intend. Leaders have been working on the curriculum. In some subjects, leaders have carefully identified what pupils need to know, in what order and when so that pupils can build their learning over time. In these subjects, teachers identify pupils' mistakes and misconceptions quickly and rectify them immediately. This enables all pupils to learn well. However, in other subjects, curriculum planning is not precise enough, and pupils are not clear about what information they need to know. This limits pupils' learning.

Leaders have not identified the precise gaps in knowledge for pupils who are not fluent readers. Therefore, there is no systematic support for them to learn to read well. This limits these pupils' ability to achieve as well as they could.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. They have made sure that all teachers have the right information and training to support pupils with SEND effectively. However, a few pupils with SEND do not follow the same ambitious curriculum as their peers, and this limits their ability to follow a broad curriculum.

Leaders have recognised that some pupils do not attend school often enough. They have taken steps to improve school attendance. However, too many pupils are persistently absent from school, and this means they are not able to develop their learning effectively.

Pupils are encouraged to develop behaviours that make a positive contribution to the community through the 'Lacon Me' values. Pupils enjoy learning about the school values and being recognised for demonstrating them. Older pupils take on responsibilities as school prefects. Pupils say that they are listened to by leaders. For example, pupils say that they asked for changes to the personal, social and health education curriculum to make it more relevant to them. Leaders have reviewed and adapted the curriculum in response.

Governors know the school well. They are clear about their role and what is needed to drive school improvement. However, leaders do not systematically monitor their work well enough. This means that they do not always make sure that they are focused on the things that will make the biggest difference.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that all staff are trained well so that they can spot any signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. As a result, staff record all their concerns, no matter how small. Leaders act on these concerns swiftly. Leaders have extensive links with local agencies and use these to make sure that pupils get the help they need.

Leaders are knowledgeable about the specific risks pupils may face in the community and online. They make sure that pupils are taught about these risks and how to keep themselves safe.

Leaders are vigilant about staff recruitment and make sure that all the necessary pre-recruitment checks are conducted.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have been working on designing an ambitious curriculum. However, this work is not consistent across all subjects and for all pupils. This means that pupils do not develop detailed knowledge and skills across the whole curriculum. Leaders should make sure that the curriculum in all subjects is well sequenced and that all pupils have access to a broad curriculum offer.
- Pupils who find reading difficult do not receive the help they need to become confident readers. This means that they cannot achieve as well as they could across the curriculum. Leaders should make sure that they identify precisely the gaps in pupils' reading knowledge and adopt a systematic approach to teaching all pupils to read fluently.
- Too many pupils do not attend school regularly, and this means that they are not able to learn as well as they should. Leaders should intensify their actions to reduce the number of pupils persistently absent from school.
- Leaders have introduced systems to monitor more precisely the work they do. However, they do not always use this information systematically enough to inform their next steps. Leaders should further develop their monitoring processes to make sure that all leaders focus their attention on the actions that will make the biggest difference.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually, this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school of the same name to be good in October 2012.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	141451
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10256986
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	556
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Leonora Castledine
Headteacher	Noah Turner
Website	http://www.lacon-childe.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 November 2017

Information about this school

- The Lacon Childe School is a smaller-than-average secondary school.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2022. The previous headteacher left in 2021 and the school had an interim headteacher in post.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider and four unregistered training providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Year 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions with teachers and representatives of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, design and technology and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with members of staff, individually and in groups, and spoke to pupils at various points during the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of responses to staff and pupils surveys, as well as Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at records relating to behaviour, bullying, attendance, and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment, scrutinising policy documents and meeting with the designated safeguarding lead.

Inspection team

Claire Price, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Huw Bishop

Ofsted Inspector

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