

Inspection of a good school: Little Heath School

Little Heath Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire RG31 5TY

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 November 2023

Outcome

Little Heath School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their time and their learning at this school. They feel safe, cared for, and welcomed. Staff work together to support pupils when needed. The school's focus on developing consistent routines, in and out of the classroom, has been welcomed by pupils. It gives them clarity about what is expected of them, although some pupils feel that staff are not yet completely consistent. School leaders recognise this and are committed to removing any variability.

In lessons, pupils work well together. They are courteous towards each other. This means that all pupils feel able to take part in discussions and to ask and answer questions. Additionally, pupils respond positively to their teachers, who help to extend their knowledge.

Pupils value and eagerly participate in activities designed to broaden their education. These range from sessions with the army to local university workshops. Through these, pupils gain a positive understanding of the different career paths available to them.

Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They appreciate their learning about well-being and consider this to be an important part of their education. Mental health awareness is a particular focus of the school's 'Senior Student Leadership Team', which helps to champion this among pupils of all ages.

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

The school is ambitious for all pupils. Within each subject, the curriculum precisely identifies what pupils need to learn. It is designed to help pupils build a deep knowledge of each topic they study. While pupils study a broad range of subjects, the number of pupils achieving the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is much lower than the government's ambition. The school has robust plans in place to increase the number of pupils achieving highly across the EBacc subjects.

Teachers regularly check what knowledge and skills pupils know. They adapt their lessons to maximise learning. While teachers give pupils feedback on their work, pupils are not always confident in how they use this. Teachers are currently receiving training on how to ensure pupils know how to use the guidance they receive to increase their knowledge and understanding.

The school prioritises ensuring that all pupils have the reading skills they need. Staff have had training to help pupils who are not yet confident readers. Small-group sessions help these pupils to become more fluent, which in turn helps them to learn well across the school's curriculum. In addition, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Staff know how different special educational needs affect individual pupil's experiences of lessons. Staff use their detailed knowledge to adapt learning to help pupils with SEND achieve.

Pupils feel safe and supported in school. They attend regularly, and any who find this more difficult are helped to improve. There is a strong focus on removing any barriers to pupils attending well. This includes a recently enlarged pastoral support team, which provides targeted support to pupils and their families who need it.

The school's range of mental health support programmes, including the Year 10 'Smile' peer mentoring scheme, helps to raise awareness of how to stay mentally healthy. Pupils welcome this initiative. They say that it helps them to understand how to balance school with their other interests. Regular surveys encourage pupils to reflect upon their experience of school, including their well-being. The results are used to check how well pupils are supported and what could be improved further.

Pupils have an extensive range of enrichment activities. They are eager to seek opportunities to take part in wider school life. Pupils enjoy many clubs and trips. Sixth-form students lead community events, such as the annual 'Tea Party' for local elderly residents. They also support younger pupils as reading buddies. They lead student groups such as the eco-group and school council. Pupils are also helped to consider their futures through a well-considered careers programme. They meet employers and develop a secure understanding of their future options. These include both apprenticeships and academic options.

The personal development curriculum for pupils in key stage 3 is detailed. The school ensures that it involves all key stage 3 pupils in a rich variety of activities. However, it is not yet as well developed for older pupils. Older pupils have a broad understanding of equality and democracy but currently do not have as many planned, meaningful opportunities to ensure they are well prepared for adulthood and life in modern Britain. Leaders have prioritised making the necessary improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The recent improvements made to the curriculum and the expertise of staff are not yet fully embedded. This includes the consistent selection of activity choices, as well as processes to help pupils learn and remember more over time. As a result, some pupils do not learn as quickly as they could. The school must ensure that it continues to implement these developments and continues to check they are having the intended impact.
- Currently, pupils in key stage 4 are not consistently provided with some of the opportunities they need to be well prepared for adulthood and life in modern Britain. Leaders are aware of this and know they must continue to strengthen and refine the personal development curriculum for older pupils.

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 school to be good in July 2014.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium](#)

funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	110063
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10287833
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,670
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	360
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Anton Lawrence
Headteacher	David Ramsden
Website	http://www.littleheath.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school currently uses two registered and four unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, curriculum leaders, and other staff.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the board of governors, including the chair.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors looked at other aspects of the curriculum.
- The inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The also took into consideration the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys, as well as speaking to staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Ed Mather, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alison Robb-Webb

Ofsted Inspector

Jo Brinkley

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023