

Lode Heath School

Lode Lane, Solihull, West Midlands, B91 2HW

Inspection dates

5–6 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The new associate headteacher and her team have made considerable improvements to the school since the last inspection.
- Leaders with support of the Trust have created a culture of high expectations in relation to learning, behaviour and achievement.
- Trustees have ensured that governance is highly effective. Governors hold leaders to account through robust monitoring and ensure that leaders focus on improvement.
- Although teaching overall is good and, as a result, pupils make good progress, there is variability in its quality. Activities are not always well matched to pupils' abilities, teachers do not always check on pupils' understanding and adjust teaching accordingly and pupils do not always take note of teachers' written and verbal feedback.
- Weaker teaching in mathematics and science means pupils' outcomes are not as good as in other subjects. When teachers' planning does not take pupils' needs fully into account, low level disruption is sometimes apparent in lessons.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations of their pupils. Strategic planning of teachers' professional development is supporting further improvement. However, training is not always well focused on subjects where improvement is most needed.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils. The enrichment programme enables pupils to develop their creative and technical skills as well as supporting their well-being.
- Attendance has rapidly improved and is now above the national average.
- High expectations of good conduct have reduced the incidents of poor behaviour and led to a reduction in exclusions.
- Pupils' attitudes are very positive. They are very polite and welcoming to visitors.
- Outcomes are good. Pupils make good progress from their different starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils' outcomes are improving. Leaders' plans to improve the progress made by these pupils are proving effective.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching so that it matches the very best in the school and enables all pupils to make good progress. Do this by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan activities that are well matched to pupils' abilities
 - check on pupils' understanding in lessons and adjust teaching where necessary
 - ensure that written and verbal feedback is followed through by pupils to support the development of their knowledge, understanding and skills
 - maintain and extend the recent improvements in the quality of teaching in mathematics and science.

- Improve the impact of leadership by ensuring that training is well focused on subjects where improvement is most needed, in particular mathematics and science.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The newly appointed headteacher is highly ambitious for the school and has already made significant changes with evident success. She has established a culture of high expectations and ambition in a relatively short period of time. Staff and pupils are responding positively to this. She is focused on further improving the school so that it can provide the very best standard of education for its pupils.
- The new headteacher and her recently appointed senior leadership team benefit greatly from the support provided by the AMAT executive headteacher and other colleagues from the trust. Together, they hold regular meetings, analyse pupils' progress information and monitor the quality of teaching. As a result, leaders know their school well and are able to put support in place where and when it is needed.
- Senior leaders support and hold middle leaders to account through a well-defined line management structure. There is now consistency in communication leading to staff being clear about leaders' expectations of them. This is having a positive impact on improvements across the school.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is secure and honest in its evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement. Monitoring is robust through lesson observations, learning walks and work scrutiny. Teachers welcome this feedback and see it as a very positive process in helping them improve their practice so that pupils make better progress.
- Leaders have recruited effective teachers and, since the beginning of this academic year, the school has been fully staffed with subject specialists. This is already having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning, in particular in mathematics.
- Teachers speak highly of the professional development they receive. Where teachers have not been as effective as they could be, the school has provided them with tailored support plans to further develop their practice. Evidence was provided of the success of this process in several areas. Leaders give teachers opportunities to share effective practice on themes such as questioning, provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and starter activities. However, training to improve teaching is not as well targeted as it ought to be, especially to subjects where improvement is most needed, including mathematics and science.
- The curriculum provides a broad and rich experience for pupils. In key stage 3, all pupils study the national curriculum subjects, that are supported by a range of enrichment opportunities in the arts, technology and sport in particular. Pupils choose their options for key stage 4 in Year 9 from an extensive range of subjects including some vocational courses that have recently been introduced. There is a range of intervention groups in place in both key stages targeted at pupils' needs, including additional support in English and mathematics.
- The school provides very good impartial careers advice and guidance that ensures pupils receive high-quality information. Pupils in Year 11 are very positive about their careers advice and the opportunities they have been given. Good careers advice and guidance has contributed to the fact that the number of pupils who leave the school

and go on to further education, employment or apprenticeships has been above the national average for several years.

- Leaders are making effective use of the pupil premium. There are clear strategies in place so that leaders can track and evaluate pupils' progress in order to determine impact. Where strategies are not effective, they are withdrawn. The attendance and behaviour of disadvantaged pupils has improved significantly since the beginning of the year. Although pupils' progress is still not where leaders want it to be, there is a trend of improvement over the last three years.
- As an inclusive school, leaders are keen to encourage disadvantaged pupils to take up leadership roles in the school. As a result, some of these pupils are now supporting other pupils in a variety of ways.
- Since joining the Arden Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), provision for pupils with SEND has improved. Liaison with feeder primary schools has a focus on the identification of needs, with all pupils new to the school screened for reading and spelling. As a result, teachers have a better understanding of pupils' needs and are implementing personalised strategies into their teaching. A range of external support is evident in school. For example, hearing impairment specialists now come into the school regularly. Staff are also given regular training. As a result, pupils with SEND are making better progress. Pupils say that they feel happy and are supported well in the school.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is strong. The school provides a programme of personal, social, health and economic education, that it calls 'Life Ready'. This prepares pupils positively for life in modern Britain. It covers a range of relevant topics such as the importance of democracy, the rule of law and keeping safe on-line. Opportunities in lessons for reflection and for discussing moral issues in philosophy, for example, enhance this provision further.

Governance of the school

- Governance is now a strength of the school following the support of the AMAT Trust board. The trustees are extremely competent and knowledgeable and has clearly been instrumental in the recent rapid improvements of the school.
- Governors undertake their strategic and statutory functions with great effect and regularly visit the school.
- Trustees and governors have very high aspirations for the school. They hold leaders to account, providing the necessary challenge in relation to the quality of teaching, learning and progress. This is already having a significant impact on the quality of education being provided.
- Governors take their safeguarding role seriously. They have all had relevant training and ensure that they monitor the suitability of adults to work at the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated senior lead and deputy lead for safeguarding are both highly trained and experienced in dealing with safeguarding matters. They have created a positive

culture of safeguarding across the school and deliver regular training and updates to staff.

- The safeguarding team work with the relevant external agencies and are tenacious in following up concerns. Records are detailed and provide evidence of how vulnerable pupils are effectively supported. Pupils' safety and welfare are clearly a priority.
- There is a very robust and insightful Prevent strategy and the school is very aware of the local context. Pupils are encouraged to debate differences of opinions in lessons, monitored by staff who are very much aware of their statutory obligations.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and feel confident in speaking to a member of staff about any concerns. They know how to keep themselves and others safe and understand the risks of using social media.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Now the school is fully staffed with subject specialists, teachers' strong subject knowledge is providing pupils across the school with much more rewarding learning experiences in the classroom.
- Teachers' high expectations and excellent relationships with their pupils have resulted in a conducive learning environment. The majority of pupils feel confident to participate in and contribute to learning in lessons. Higher expectations have led to high quality work across a range of subjects. For example, in the art department, pupils' work on display is exemplary and is providing inspiration for other pupils who are studying art.
- As a result of training on assessment this year, teachers are now better skilled in planning and delivering lessons appropriate to pupils' needs and assessing pupils' progress more accurately.
- Where learning is highly effective, planning is based on detailed knowledge of pupils' current understanding. This is providing suitable and engaging teaching and learning strategies for pupils, including collaborative learning opportunities, extended writing tasks and relevant support. In English, for example, teachers break down tasks appropriately to enable pupils to gain a strong understanding of the texts they are studying.
- Teachers' use of effective questioning promotes deeper thinking, that is supporting better understanding. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson, pupils were encouraged to explain fully how they worked out their answers on direct proportion, which they did with confidence and accuracy.
- There is some variability in the quality of teaching in mathematics and science, and where it is less effective, this is due to planning that does not take into account the needs of all pupils and a slower pace of learning. In a minority of lessons, this results in a few pupils becoming disengaged and some low-level disruption.
- Teachers support their pupils well in lessons. They monitor how well pupils are getting on with tasks so that they can provide specific support where needed. Where teaching is most effective, teachers ask questions or suggest alternative ways of dealing with a task so that pupils can work out solutions for themselves.
- Teachers take into account the needs of pupils with SEND when planning activities.

This is helping them make better progress now than they have in the past. In addition, teaching assistants are skilful in supporting pupils, guiding them through tasks well but at the same time ensuring that pupils complete their work with some independence.

- The literacy strategy across the school is effective. The school has a literacy checklist that is supporting pupils in developing their spelling and grammar. Reading strategies are also leading to a significant improvement in pupils' reading.
- In all subjects there is a strong focus on developing the breadth of pupils' vocabulary. In addition, teachers teach pupils to understand command words such as 'explain', 'describe', and 'analyse' so that they can deepen their knowledge and understanding of their learning.
- The majority of teachers apply the school's marking and feedback policy well. Teachers encourage pupils to respond to feedback. This is often very positive demonstrating pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do. However, there is evidence of some variation where feedback is not diagnostic and therefore this inhibits pupils' ability to understand what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers set homework regularly in all subjects. The overwhelming majority of parents say that pupils are provided with appropriate homework for their ages.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The leadership of the pastoral team was restructured at the beginning of this year and is now more strategic. As a result, staff are implementing planned rather than reactive strategies to support pupils effectively.
- The pastoral staff are very committed to the pupils. They provide them with a lot of support when required. Pupils say that they benefit from the support they are given and there are clearly very positive relationships between staff and pupils.
- Pupils say that they feel safe around school. Bullying is rare, but when it happens, it is dealt with promptly and effectively. Monitoring records indicate that the school's anti-bullying programme is leading to a reduction in the number of bullying incidents this year.
- Pupils can explain how the Life Ready programme is supporting them in developing a better understanding of the world around them and how to keep safe. The programme covers topics such as friendship, healthy living, diversity and discrimination, body image, eating disorders and extremism. In Year 7, for example, pupils were able to describe how they had benefitted from learning about road safety.
- Pupils with SEND are supported well and teachers have high expectations of them. They appreciate the careers' guidance they receive in Year 9, which helps them make better informed option choices.
- Children looked after are carefully monitored and regular review meetings take place with leaders, key workers, parents and carers. These pupils are provided with additional support including trips, mental health care, resources and mentoring,

depending on their individual needs.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have focused on behaviour and attendance and this has brought about considerable improvement. Pupils' conduct around school during social times is extremely good. They are courteous, polite and friendly at all times and demonstrate pride in being a pupil at the school.
- In lessons, attitudes are very positive on the whole. On the rare occasions where there is low-level disruption, for example in some mathematics and science lessons, it is due to lessons not being planned appropriately. Leaders are actively addressing this.
- Pupils agree that behaviour has improved due to teachers dealing with situations more consistently by using the school's Behaviour for Learning system. However, some pupils believe there is too much emphasis on poor behaviour rather than rewarding good behaviour. Leaders have taken this feedback on board and have now introduced an explicit rewards system to recognise positive conduct. Pupils greatly appreciate this system.
- Where pupils require significant additional support for their behaviour and/or emotional needs beyond what the school can provide, the school places them in alternative provision. These pupils are provided with bespoke timetables to address their learning and welfare needs. For example, some may only attend alternative provision for part of the week with the rest of their time at the school. Thorough records demonstrate that teachers monitor these pupils carefully, with regular visits to providers to check how well pupils are progressing.
- There has been rapid improvement in attendance this year due to a strategic and concerted effort by leaders to deal with absence and persistent absence. The trust's attendance officer is helping the school with home visits and dealing with persistent absence. As a result, the school's attendance is now above the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND is also improving.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2018, pupils' attainment in key measures improved and was broadly in line with the national average. Overall progress was also in line with the national average and had improved significantly from the previous two years. However, pupils made less progress, from their starting points, than their peers nationally in mathematics and science. Disadvantaged pupils made less progress than other pupils nationally.
- Current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are now making better progress across all subjects, including in mathematics and science.
- Leaders now ensure that all staff focus on improving disadvantaged pupils' progress. Staff training is upskilling teachers to plan and use a wider variety of teaching strategies in lessons, that better support disadvantaged pupils and enable them to engage more readily in their learning. While their progress does not yet match that of other pupils nationally, it is improving across all subjects, including mathematics and

science.

- Pupils with SEND are also making better progress from their starting points. This is as a result of better leadership of SEND provision and effective support from teachers and teaching assistants. Teachers now have a better understanding of the needs of their pupils and adapt tasks so that pupils can understand the work they have to do and participate fully in lessons.

School details

Unique reference number	137008
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10067153

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1123
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Patrick Ryan
Headteacher	Laura Suddon
Telephone number	01217041421
Website	http://www.lodeheathschool.co.uk/
Email address	office@lodeheath.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 July 2018

Information about this school

- Lode Heath School is a larger than the average sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- The school uses alternative provision at Solihull Academy and ESCOS.
- The school joined the Arden MAT in January 2018. The board of trustees oversees the local governing body, which in turn is responsible for monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and progress of pupils and their welfare.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 41 lessons across a broad range of subjects. These included lessons observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also scrutinised pupils' work.
- Inspectors held discussions with four groups of pupils and with many other pupils informally around the school.
- Meetings were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders, the trust executive headteacher, teachers and newly qualified teachers. A meeting was also held with four members of the governing body. A meeting was held with two members of the board of trustees, the CEO and four members of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the 211 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the 154 responses to the pupil survey and the 56 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors looked at the school's website and a range of documentation provided by the school. This included: information on pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour; school policies; the school's self-evaluation of its work; school improvement plans: and information about safeguarding.
- Inspectors looked at behaviour records and reviewed safeguarding documentation and how these related to daily practice.

Inspection team

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Karen Lockett	Ofsted Inspector
Jacqueline Newsome	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.

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