

Inspection of Letchmore Infants' and Nursery School

Letchmore Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG1 3PS

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 July 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are extremely proud of their school. They run through the gates every morning, excited to play and learn in the school's supportive environment.

The school's values permeate everything that happens here. Pupils learn what they mean, for example equality and diversity. They demonstrate them in their day-to-day activities. Pupils love the 'values tea-parties' at the end of each term, when values champions are rewarded and recognised for their efforts.

The school is highly inclusive. Adults are ambitious for every pupil. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged get extensive and effective support to be successful learners. Most pupils achieve very well, thanks to the school's high expectations of them.

Pupils' well-being is a top priority. There is a strong pastoral team, which includes the school dog and guinea pigs. Nurture breakfast and lunchtime clubs teach pupils vital social and emotional skills.

Pupils enjoy an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. They can try new sports and activities, such as archery, basketball or Indian dance. At a writing club, pupils learn from a published author. Music has a high profile. Pupils can sing in the school choir or perform in a rock band. Various leadership roles develop pupils' sense of responsibility.

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

From the moment they join the school in Nursery, children's learning is set out precisely in an ambitious and creative curriculum. The early years curriculum prepares children exceptionally well for their later learning. For example, in an 'Explorers' topic, Reception children learn about weather and climate in different parts of the world. High-quality stories support this learning. This gets children ready for the key stage 1 geography curriculum.

The school's creative approach to the curriculum continues in key stage 1. The curriculum sets out the essential knowledge and skills pupils should learn. Teachers deliver sequences of lessons that support pupils in achieving the curriculum aims through stimulating activities. The lessons build on pupils' existing knowledge, both indoors and outdoors. Teachers observe pupils closely, using pupils' responses to questions and recorded work to check how well pupils are learning. They adjust their lessons as needed. As a result, pupils achieve increasingly and, sometimes, exceptionally well.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. In the early years, children listen to and join in with a wide range of high-quality stories. These develop their language and communication skills. In Nursery, children identify the sounds and letters that make up words. They practise mark making and develop the physical skills needed for

early writing. In the Reception Year and Year 1, skilled adults expertly deliver daily phonics lessons. They check pupils' understanding often and put effective support in place for those who need it. The school's actions to improve reading outcomes have had a marked effect. By the end of Year 1, most children are ready to become confident and fluent readers.

In the early years, adults set up clear and consistent routines. These help children to understand what is expected of them. Throughout the school, relationships are warm and respectful. As a result, pupils' behaviour in lessons is impeccable. Classrooms are calm and purposeful spaces, where pupils learn without disruption. At lunchtime, pupils socialise happily. Year 2 'play leaders' set up equipment and support their peers in playing sports or playground games.

The school has robust systems for identifying pupils with SEND. Most pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum as their peers, with adaptations. Some pupils have a high level of need. The school provides them with a bespoke curriculum. This supports these pupils with SEND to make strong progress. The school has set up a nurture room. Here, pupils with social and emotional needs receive effective, targeted support. This helps them to be successful learners back in their classrooms.

Pupils' personal development is extremely well catered for. The school has designed an exceptional programme of enrichment that includes visitors, trips and themed 'inspiration days'. This is carefully planned to enhance pupils' learning and offer them opportunities they might not otherwise have. During an 'animal experience day', for example, pupils handled meerkats and a purple skink. On a trip to a discovery centre, pupils learned about the Mars planetary exploration. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of healthy lifestyles, fundamental British values and the major world religions. All of this equips pupils with the skills and knowledge they will need to navigate their future lives.

Governors share the school's ambitious vision. They are very well informed about the school's work and progress towards its strategic objectives. Leaders, including governors, are extraordinarily reflective. They are dedicated to providing the best possible education for pupils. They constantly seek ways to improve. Consequently, staff appreciate the training and support offered. Parents have a highly positive view of the way the school supports them and their children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	117151
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10323638
Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	296
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sally Davis
Co-headteachers	Jo Harding and Eleanor Williams
Website	www.letchmore.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 and 22 May 2013 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The leadership team has changed since the last inspection. The current co-headteachers were appointed in January 2018 and April 2021, respectively.
- In September 2015, the school increased the number of pupils it could admit from 224 to 332.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with a range of leaders, including senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and governors, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector also met with a representative from the authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, music, and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and spoke with some pupils about their learning. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to several pupils read to a familiar adult. Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work and curriculum plans in other subjects.
- 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.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation and policies. These included the school development plan and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted's parent and staff questionnaires. They also spoke with pupils, parents and staff to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

Caroline Crozier, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sarah Merritt	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Ready	Ofsted Inspector

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