

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Leigh Academy Milestone

Ash Road, New Ash Green, Longfield, Kent DA3 8JZ

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 June 2025

Outcome

Leigh Academy Milestone has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The principal of this school is Sarah Goosani. This school is part of the Leigh Academies Trust which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Simon Beamish, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Frank Green.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' education is of the highest quality at this transformative school. Staff have consistently high aspirations for pupils and ensure that they meet them. Skilled staff identify pupils' personal targets precisely. Teachers use these to select activities that ensure that pupils develop crucial skills and knowledge. Pupils love learning. They show high levels of curiosity when exploring new concepts and experiences. Pupils make rapid progress against targets in their education, health and care plans. As a result, pupils become increasingly independent. This helps them to flourish in school and beyond.

Staff model high expectations of behaviour exceptionally well. Pupils' excellent conduct reflects this. Staff build warm and caring relationships with pupils. They respond positively to these. Pupils have trusted adults that they know will manage any concerns they have. In turn, this helps pupils to develop deeply compassionate and caring relationships with their peers. As a result, they feel happy and safe in school.

Pupils have ample opportunities to develop their skills and talents. These include a range of clubs, such as signing or performing arts. The clubs support pupils in developing essential skills of communication and resilience. Pupils further develop these qualities through their work in the school cafes or in school performances. Pupils participate excitedly in these activities.

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

Staff design highly effective strategies to break down any barriers to pupil's learning. Staff know their pupils exceptionally well. Teachers and the highly skilled therapy team use this knowledge to plan the support that helps every pupil to thrive at school. The school uses this deep understanding of pupils to design its ambitious curriculum. The school has identified exactly the skills and knowledge each pupil needs to be successful.

Teachers are experts in their subjects. One pupil said, 'Teachers take time to explain learning to us.' This is evident in their careful explanation of learning using personalised communication strategies. As a result, pupils know what they need to do to be successful and independent in their learning. Teachers make careful checks on pupils' understanding. This helps staff to quickly adapt activities to ensure that pupils do not fall behind.

Reading is at the heart of the school's excellent work. Starting in early years, staff ensure that pupils have opportunities to develop a passion for stories. Older pupils are keen to select high-quality texts from the school's library. Well-trained staff deliver personalised phonics programmes. This helps pupils to develop essential pre-reading skills before moving on to the sounds and letters they need. Consequently, pupils become confident readers over time.

Staff match the curriculum meticulously to the special educational needs and/or disabilities of pupils. Pupils learn how to communicate their ideas clearly. They also develop a deep understanding of stage appropriate mathematical concepts. Pupils show high levels of curiosity in their learning. This helps them to explore the whole curriculum successfully. Consequently, pupils achieve very well. Older pupils achieve a range of qualifications that are matched precisely to their needs and interests.

Students in the sixth form benefit strongly from the excellent opportunities they enjoy. They achieve qualifications in English and mathematics. They also achieve bespoke qualifications that provide them with employability skills. Every student enjoys well-planned work experience activities. These include working with staff in the school hydrotherapy pool or local charity shops. These experiences help students to thrive in their next steps.

Pupils love school. This is clear in the smiles and warm welcome they give staff on arrival each day. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. Children in the early years concentrate deeply on the activities they select. This continues throughout the school. Lessons are calm and highly purposeful. Pupils' love for learning is also evident in their frequent attendance. The school carefully tracks pupil absence. They use this information to identify precisely the pupils who need further help to attend well. Medical issues hamper some pupils' regular attendance. However, the excellent specialist care they receive improves their attendance over time.

The school's work to support pupils' personal development is exemplary. Staff ensure that every planned opportunity develops pupils' resilience and social skills. For example, pupils

have specific targets about sharing in their snack times. Opportunities such as outdoor learning in the woodland area encourage pupils to take risks and develop their curiosity about the world. Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have deeply mature attitudes to difference and diversity. One pupil said, 'We treat each other how we want to be treated ourselves.' This is a view shared by all.

Leaders at all levels have an unwavering commitment to ensuring that pupils have the very best education they can. They have detailed processes to help them reflect this work. This helps them to continually refine the work of the school in the best interests of pupils. Governors and trustees share these aspirations. They offer high levels of challenge and support to ensure that the school maintains its exceptional work. The dedicated staff team shows deep levels of care and compassion in its work. They enjoy a high-quality training programme that develops their expertise. This helps them to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they can. Staff are rightly proud of this work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 third ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Milestone School, the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in November 2011.

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	137883
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10379856
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	383
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	65
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Frank Green
CEO of the trust	Simon Beamish
Principal	Sarah Goosani
Website	www.leighacademymilestone.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 December 2019

Information about this school

- The academy is an International Baccalaureate World School. It teaches the Primary Years Programme.
- The school joined the Leigh academies trust in August 2012.
- The school's headteacher and senior leadership team have changed since the previous inspection.
- The school caters for pupils aged 3 to 19 years who have autism, physical disability, severe learning difficulty and profound and multiple learning difficulty.
- All pupils have an EHCP.
- The school has Nursery provision that offers observation and assessment.

- The school has a number of satellite sites co-located on the premises of mainstream schools within the same trust. These include nursery and sixth-form provision.
- 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

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspection team met with the principal and other leaders. The lead inspector also met members of the local governing body, a group of trustees and the CEO of the trust.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspection team: 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 inspection team spoke to pupils in lessons. The inspection team also met with a number of representative groups of pupils.
- Throughout the inspection, the inspection team met with groups of staff and also considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.
- The inspection team had regard to the views parents expressed through Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Gavin Thomas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Liz McIntosh

Ofsted Inspector

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