

Inspection of Knowles Primary School

Queensway, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK2 2HB

Inspection dates: 15–16 October 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and safe at school. The day gets off to a calm start. Pupils value the time they are given to think ahead about what the day will hold for them. Pupils get along well and care for each other. Bullying and unkind behaviour are rare. When they do happen, pupils are clear that adults sort things out. Adults and pupils fully embrace the school's values, expressed in 'five ways of being: connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give'.

Leaders ensure that pupils are safe. Incidents of poor behaviour are low. Leaders have put in place consistent procedures for encouraging and rewarding good behaviour and attendance. As a result, attendance is improving across the school. Staff and pupils appreciate the impact this has had on the school environment.

Pupils are proud to attend this school. They enjoy opportunities to take part in sporting competitions, after-school clubs and school trips linked to their learning. They especially enjoy weekly enrichment activities where they get to learn new skills.

Pupils do not learn well enough, especially in mathematics and reading. This is because teaching is not well organised and does not reflect the highest expectations for what pupils can achieve.

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

Leaders have mapped out the skills they want pupils to learn in all subjects. The choice of the knowledge pupils must learn is left to teachers to decide. However, teachers' subject knowledge is not strong across all the subjects taught. This means that pupils do not always learn the most important knowledge and in the most logical order to be able to remember it.

There has not been a sharp focus on early reading. Although most pupils meet the requirements of the Year 1 national screening check in phonics, some do not learn to link letters and sounds quickly enough to be able to read confidently. This is because the books they are asked to read do not match the sounds they learn well enough. Most pupils catch up by the end of key stage 2. Nevertheless, pupils are not guided to select books that are well matched to their reading ability. This means that too few pupils develop the skills needed to achieve the higher standards.

Leaders' plans to improve the teaching of mathematics are at an early stage. Teachers sequence learning better now than in the past. Some pupils still find mathematics too easy and need more challenging work.

Pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are carefully identified and planned for. The work and support these pupils receive is helpfully focused on the things that will make them successful.

Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are strengths of this school. Pupils enjoy opportunities to demonstrate the school's values and are rewarded for doing so. Teachers use assemblies and personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons to teach pupils about tolerance. Pupils share their cultures and religions with others. They treat each other with respect.

Leaders have taken effective action to work with parents and carers to improve attendance. Most parents are appreciative of the support they receive from adults in the school. In any cases where pupils' absence remains a concern, leaders continue to seek helpful solutions.

Pupils are taught how to keep their minds and bodies healthy. They learn about healthy eating and the importance of physical activity. Pupils learn how their bodies change as they grow up and about different types of relationships.

In the Reception Year, children play and learn together well. Clear routines support the children to know what is expected of them and to enjoy success. Learning activities are organised to encourage curiosity and support children's understanding of the world around them. Adults in Reception check what children can and cannot do before they move learning on. They adapt their teaching so that children understand what they are learning. Children listen to stories that excite and interest them. This helps them learn new words. At the end of the Reception Year, most children achieve well. They are ready for Year 1.

Leaders have identified correctly where pupils' learning needs to improve. However, plans to achieve this are not well formed. Weaknesses in leaders' planning link to a lack of oversight and support from the trust. Trustees have recently developed a clearer understanding of their role. They are beginning to improve the way they support leaders and hold them to account.

Leaders pay careful attention to staff workload. The adults in school appreciate this and the positive impact on their own well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils' safety is given the utmost importance by all the adults at this school. Staff are trained to spot the symptoms and signs of abuse. They know and use the procedures in place for reporting and recording concerns about pupils. These are acted on in a timely way. Leaders work with other agencies where necessary, ensuring that pupils receive the support they need. School-based family support workers provide helpful early assistance for families.

Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe; they have all recently learned about keeping safe while using the internet. They also know how to keep their bodies safe from harm.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers' subject knowledge is not well established across the curriculum. This hampers how well learning is planned, to build successfully on pupils' knowledge over time. Leaders need to make sure that all teachers develop their subject knowledge, to inform the way they teach each subject and to ensure that teaching builds pupils' knowledge and understanding in different subjects reliably.
- Some pupils do not learn to read quickly enough. Leaders need to improve the expertise of those tasked with teaching pupils to read, so that pupils quickly learn the skills they need to be able to read fluently and confidently. This includes matching books to the sounds that pupils are learning, and their developing reading ability, to support pupils' progress.
- In mathematics, some pupils are not challenged sufficiently because work does not match their next steps in learning precisely enough. Furthermore, teaching needs to build in regular opportunities for reasoning and problem solving, using assessment to shape lessons so that all pupils are challenged at an appropriate level.
- Attendance is improving and persistent absence is declining. Leaders need to continue to focus on attendance to reduce persistent absence to be at least no greater than the national figure.
- Recently, trustees have recognised the need for external advice and support to enable them to better understand their statutory duties. Trustees should ensure that they develop a clear strategic understanding of the school, so that their support and challenge to leaders result in rapid and secure improvement.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	144357
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10122194
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	398
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	L Abbott
Headteacher	S Rice
Website	knowlesprimaryschool.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Knowles Primary School became a sponsor-led academy and part of the Lakes Academies Trust on 1 May 2017. When its predecessor school, Knowles Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- The board of trustees has recently been reorganised.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors met with a range of leaders, including trustees, a leader from the trust, the headteacher, deputy assistant headteachers and team leaders. Reading, mathematics, physical education (PE), design and technology and science were considered as part of this inspection. Inspectors visited lessons, met with leaders and teachers, spoke to pupils and looked at pupils' work.
- The inspection of safeguarding included scrutinising documentation and discussions with leaders, staff and pupils.

- In addition to discussions with parents, the 20 responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire were considered, including 18 free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered the 21 responses to the staff survey.
- A range of the school's documentation was examined, including: the school's information on how well pupils are learning; pupils' attendance records; leaders' self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness; minutes of governing body and trustee's' meetings.
- Inspectors explored the school's website to evaluate the quality of information provided to parents.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and spoke to pupils to gather their views about the school.

Inspection team

Clare Haines, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lizzie Jeanes	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Ashcroft	Ofsted Inspector

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