

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



19 June 2018

Ms Sarah Howell
Headteacher
Lenham Primary School
Ham Lane
Lenham
Maidstone
Kent
ME17 2LL

Dear Ms Howell

Short inspection of Lenham Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The period since the previous inspection has been a turbulent one with three changes of headteacher. Since your appointment, you have accurately assessed the school's strengths and rightly prioritised the areas for improvement. You have shared your evaluation with governors and have developed plans to bring about further improvements, particularly with respect to the quality of teaching and the progress and attainment of pupils.

Leaders are fulfilling the school's values of personal excellence, respect and friendship, inspiration, determination, courage and equality. Since the last inspection, you have strengthened leadership by ensuring that leaders are well trained and are sharing the same high aspirations as you in developing a positive culture for teaching, learning and good behaviour in the school. Teamwork among staff is strong as they share the same vision as you in wanting the best for all pupils.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. This is because they visit regularly and know the school well. Governors keep their knowledge and skills up to date through regular training. They use their skills to keep a careful watch on pupils' progress and provide the right level of challenge.

The majority of parents and carers are positive about the school. The majority of parents who spoke to me during the day or who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that their children enjoy school. A small number raised concerns about the high turnover of staff and the quality of communication between home and school. You have stabilised the turnover of staff this year and the quality of teaching has improved significantly since 2016. Governors understand that accurate, regular and clear communication with parents is crucial in this supportive village community.

Pupils work hard and with very positive attitudes. They respect each other's ideas and collaborate well both in the classroom and on the playground. They take pride and care in their work and this is reflected in their books. Staff, parents, pupils and governors are highly appreciative of your inclusive approach. One parent speaking for many said, 'The school has good links to the community and has a wonderfully inclusive, friendly environment.'

Inspection findings show that you have successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection in relation to pupils developing a good understanding of letters and the sounds they make. Reading standards in Year 1 have risen significantly and there has been a three-year increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check. Your accurate information about the progress that current pupils are making shows that nearly all pupils in Year 1 are currently on course to reach the expected standard in phonics.

In the early years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was above the national average in 2016 and 2017. Children currently in the early years are making good progress from starting points that were broadly typical for their age. In 2017, at the end of key stage 1, attainment in reading was close to the national average but at the end of key stage 2 attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was below the national average. The leadership team has successfully improved the quality of teaching across the school and, as a result, pupils' progress and attainment have improved significantly. Current progress has improved in reading and mathematics and this had a positive impact on standards in all year groups. However, there is more work to do to ensure that both the most able and disadvantaged pupils make better progress in writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

You place a high priority on keeping pupils safe and this defines the culture in the school of putting pupils' safety first. Pupils told me that they feel very safe in school and that there is always an adult ready to help. One pupil speaking for others said, 'A teacher is always there if you look or feel upset.' They told me that bullying is rare but if it happens it is resolved quickly. Leaders act successfully to address any safeguarding issues that arise and have reorganised the procedures for pupils leaving the school at the end of the day.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained and knowledgeable so that they can spot and deal with any safeguarding problems quickly, liaising well with any external agencies when necessary. Pupils are supervised well at break and lunchtimes. There is a good range of play equipment for pupils to use and playtimes are well organised and harmonious. Pupils told me that there have been a number of lessons and assemblies to help them stay safe, including e-safety, road safety, cycling safety and awareness of strangers.

Governors are well informed about safeguarding and regularly check the effectiveness of the school's records to keep pupils safe. Governors have completed the safer recruitment training. Pupils' attendance has improved and meets national expectations.

Inspection findings

- In 2017, pupils' attainment in writing dropped below the national average. Leaders have introduced a new whole-school approach to the teaching of writing and spelling which focuses on extending pupils' vocabulary. They have also developed examples of high-quality work for every year group so that expectations can be raised. The school's information shows that there has been sustained improvement in the progress that current pupils are making in writing across key stage 2. Leaders support disadvantaged pupils with additional reading support. However, the progress of the most able and disadvantaged pupils in writing continues to be a priority for improvement.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics at key stage 1 have been below the national average for the last two years. Leaders have now developed a new approach to the teaching of mathematics which prioritises whole-class teaching and an emphasis on times-table fluency. I observed a times-table lesson in Year 1 and the pupils were well motivated and confident. You have provided more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills on a weekly basis. Leaders have ensured a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics across the school and current pupils are making much better progress.
- Leaders have improved the tracking of pupils' progress to ensure that teachers quickly identify pupils who fall behind. This has been successful in ensuring that pupils at the end of key stage 2 improve their progress across reading, writing and mathematics.
- Outcomes in science dipped at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. You have now appointed a new leader for science and she has introduced a number of new initiatives including a 'science week' to promote interest and a programme of visitors to the school, for example a dentist to Year 4, to talk about scientific topics. She has also successfully bid for a grant from the Royal Society to enhance science resources. I scrutinised a number of science books and it is clear there has been better progress in science across key stage 2 this year. There is, however, a need to ensure greater coverage of the science curriculum and more emphasis on scientific investigation.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers embed the actions already taken to improve progress in writing, with a particular focus at key stage 2 on the performance of the most able and disadvantaged pupils
- there is greater coverage of the science curriculum and more emphasis on scientific investigation.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sir Robin Boshier
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss the school's self-evaluation information about pupils' progress and improvements since the last inspection. We did several 'learning walks' through early years, and key stages 1 and 2. We observed teaching and learning in early years and key stage 1 and 2 classrooms and looked at a range of pupils' work in books. We scrutinised the writing, mathematics and science books of about 30 pupils. I observed behaviour during lessons and on the playground. I met with pupils to listen to their experience of school life and how safe they feel. I held meetings with the senior leadership team, governors and the local authority improvement adviser. I looked at a range of written evidence, including the school's self-evaluation form, the school improvement plan, the current progress data, the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and the school curriculum. I took account of the views of 38 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, their written comments, and the views of parents who spoke to us before the start of the school day. I also took account of the views of 21 members of staff and 38 pupils as well as the views of pupils we met during the day.