

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



14 February 2018

Mrs Elizabeth Maycock
Interim Executive Headteacher
Ford End Church of England Primary School
Main Road
Ford End
Chelmsford
Essex
CM3 1LQ

Dear Mrs Maycock

Short inspection of Ford End Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 February 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You are rightly proud that Ford End Church of England Primary is a caring, welcoming school in which pupils develop the sense of security needed to become confident learners. The comment from one parent that staff 'go above and beyond to care for the children' was representative of the sentiments expressed by many others. Staff have successfully ensured that the good behaviour and positive relationships noted at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained. All parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that the school ensures pupils are well behaved.

Pupils are polite, eager and cooperative in their learning. They are similarly enthusiastic and keen in their play, where they mix easily and well and take care of each other. Pupils told me how the school's values impact upon their daily life. For example, they explained that fellowship is an important aspect of friendships here. Pupils also explained how endurance means, 'you try, try and try again in your learning'.

There have been recent changes to the leadership of the school. You took up your post as interim executive headteacher in September 2017, at the same time as the interim head of school took up her position. Together you are successfully ensuring that the focus remains on pupils, their welfare and learning. You have several

avenues through which you communicate the work of the school to parents. However, some parents do not think they are communicated with effectively about decisions made at the school. Governors acknowledge that this is an aspect of their work which they need to review and amend as appropriate.

In this small school, each teacher also has some leadership responsibility. You have made clear your aims to develop these leadership roles, especially those relating to foundation subjects. Staff explained how they are being supported and empowered to take on more responsibility and they are responding enthusiastically to these opportunities.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that teachers had more opportunities to share what they do best across the school and with other schools. Teachers told me how much they have benefited from working with teachers and leaders from other local schools.

By implementing the skills and strategies developed through visits to other schools, adults in early years have further improved the quality of provision. As a consequence, children thrive in the well-run early years class. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been above national averages for the previous three years. Further evidence of the improving quality of teaching, learning and assessment can be seen in the good and improving pupil achievement in both key stage 1 and key stage 2.

Under the knowledgeable chair of governors, the governing body provides you with strong support. Governors share your commitment to providing the very best education and care for pupils. Governors gather evidence from a variety of sources to assure themselves of the quality of education the school provides. However, governors recognise that they now need to offer more precise challenge to leaders over the progress pupils make, in particular across the broader curriculum. This has rightly been included in the school's comprehensive development plan.

The school does not meet the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website as the most recent pupil premium report was not available on the website at the time of this inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have established a strong safeguarding culture in which pupils' safety is given a high priority.

Staff know pupils well and demonstrate their knowledge of the small changes in appearance and behaviour that may indicate that a pupil may be vulnerable or at risk. Adults are familiar with the school's processes for reporting any concerns they may have and have confidence that concerns will be dealt with well by leaders. Leaders' careful and securely held records demonstrate that pupils who need help and support receive it.

Almost all pupils say they are safe and enjoy their learning. They speak confidently about the strategies they use to stay safe. For example, pupils know why it is important to exercise caution when using the internet. They also told me how much they had learned from presentations about safety from the fire service, police and children's charities. One pupil commented that the school is 'strict on safety but not on fun'. His peers agreed.

Pupils know what bullying is and they say it is a rare occurrence at their school. They express confidence that, if it did happen, adults would deal with it well. Almost all parents agree that the school deals with any issues of bullying well, and school records confirm this to be the case.

Governors take care to monitor the school's safeguarding processes and practices. They ensure that leaders carry out the relevant checks on adults working at the school and that the record of these checks is accurately maintained.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry we agreed upon was to explore the progress pupils make in their writing. This was because, in 2017, by the end of key stage 2, while pupils' progress in writing was in line with that of other pupils nationally, it was less than they made in reading and mathematics. Similarly, pupils' attainment, which was high in reading and mathematics, was in line with the national average in writing.
- Leaders have reflected on the school's approach to how writing is taught and have taken effective action to improve it. For example, leaders amended their method of teaching phonics. This is having a positive impact and, in 2017, all pupils achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. Pupils are confident readers and are increasingly accurate in their spelling.
- Teachers explained that, as a result of effective training and the sharing of good practice, they are more confident when teaching writing. For example, teachers have a precise understanding of the features of writing they want pupils to develop in each activity and communicate this well. Pupils told me that these specific targets, and the detailed feedback they receive, help them to make better progress. Comments such as, 'you know what you need to work on' were endorsed by evidence in their books. Pupils are developing their confidence and skills in different genres of writing, including topics such as Macbeth.
- We agreed that my second key line of enquiry would be to establish whether leaders provide for pupils in need of additional support well. This is because, over the previous two years, these small numbers of pupils have not made the same strong progress as their classmates in school or their peers nationally.
- Adults know pupils well and have a good understanding of any barriers to learning that each pupil faces. They use this information to put in place strategies that are improving the progress pupils make. The provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is well led. The special educational needs coordinator has an accurate knowledge of each pupil. She has

developed detailed support plans, which outline strategies that help pupils make better progress. This information is communicated appropriately to staff who use it effectively in their work with each pupil. Leaders ensure that the progress pupils make is carefully tracked and appropriate amendments are made to the support they receive. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress both socially and academically.

- Other pupils who need additional support are similarly well provided for. They too are making improved progress because they receive well-judged, effective support. Pupils and parents explained how much they appreciate the care and attention staff pay to each pupil in school.
- The third line of enquiry we agreed upon to establish if the school continued to provide good-quality education was to determine the progress pupils make across the wider curriculum. You have designed a curriculum that has successfully captured pupils' imagination. Pupils enthusiastically explained how much they enjoy learning in subjects such as art, drama, geography, history, physical education and science. They told me how much the topics such as wild weather, rain forests and chocolate interested them.
- At the time of the previous inspection, it was noted that pupils did not write fluently in subjects other than English. Together, we saw examples of pupils using their literacy skills well in subjects such as history and geography. Pupils also respond very well to tasks that require them to use technical language and evaluate the success of the experiments they carry out. Evidence in pupils' books and folders, as well as that in the bright displays around the school, indicates that pupils make good progress across a range of subjects.
- However, not all teachers are adept at creating tasks that enable pupils to make the maximum use of their skills and abilities in some subjects. For example, in science, in some classes pupils are restricted by the nature of the activity and the space on the worksheets that they are provided with to complete their work. This can limit the progress pupils, especially those who are most able, are able to make.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers plan and implement activities that enable pupils, especially those who are most able, to achieve the high standards of which they are capable across the broader curriculum
- leaders, including governors, develop a sharper focus on the progress pupils make across the curriculum
- leaders develop further strategies to ensure that parents are well informed about the positive work taking place in the school
- the school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

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

Yours sincerely

John Lucas
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with you about the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, leaders' evaluation of the quality of education, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' learning. I met with other leaders, teachers, and members of support staff, and the chair of governors together with five other governors.

I examined documents such as: the school's improvement plan; leaders' monitoring and analysis of the progress pupils make; records of pupils' attendance; pupil premium reports; and the school's safeguarding arrangements, records, files and documentation.

You and I observed pupils learning in every class. We also looked at examples of pupils' work to explore the progress they are making over time. I spoke with a group of 11 pupils and also with others informally during lessons and at breaktime regarding their learning. I also considered the views of 22 pupils who responded to the online survey.

I considered the views of parents I spoke with at the start and end of the school day. I also took into account the views of 34 parents who responded on Parent View and the 20 parents who left comments on the Parent View free-text service. The views of 16 staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire were also taken into account.