

Great Bentley Primary School

Plough Road, Great Bentley, Colchester CO7 8LD

Inspection dates

29–30 September 2015

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- School leaders, with the wholehearted support of the governing body, responded to the findings of the previous inspection with remarkable focus and vigour. They have brought about very rapid improvement in teaching, learning and assessment and, consequently, all groups of pupils achieve extremely well.
- The drive for improvement has been maintained at a consistently high pitch, underpinned by comprehensive support and training for members of staff.
- Middle leaders meticulously monitor the quality of teaching and how it has an impact on pupils' progress.
- Teaching is excellent because teachers use assessment information to pitch work at just the right level, and plan activities to stretch, engage and captivate pupils with their learning.
- Teaching assistants work very effectively to support pupils' learning.
- Governors now monitor all aspects of the work of the school very closely. Their challenge to school leaders to maintain the highest standards is rigorous, frequent and guided by a close and well-informed understanding of how well pupils are doing.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Their conduct around school is of the highest standard. They are fine ambassadors for their school. They demonstrate a hunger to learn and are tremendously encouraging to each other.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils have ample opportunities to learn and to reinforce their skills, understanding and knowledge across all subjects. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Senior leaders check the school's work very closely and use this information to target their support, hold staff to account and plan improvements.
- Disadvantaged pupils attain extremely well in reading, writing and mathematics. Compared with other pupils in the school, they achieve at least as well and often better.
- The procedures and practice for ensuring that pupils are kept safe and secure are of high quality. They are scrupulously maintained and quality assured.
- Children in the Reception class make an excellent start to their education. They are well taught and make rapid progress. They are well prepared for entry to Year 1.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of pupils' presentation and handwriting is consistently high across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher has set the bar high for all aspects of the school's work and is uncompromising in her pursuit of excellence. She responded to the findings of the last inspection with exceptional focus and energy. Expectations of what pupils can achieve have been raised and are now very high. The school's leadership team is strong and completely unified in purpose. The headteacher is very ably supported by her deputy and assistant headteacher. The morale of members of staff in all roles is high and their enthusiasm for their work is infectious.
- Leaders track pupils' progress very carefully. Pupils who show the first signs of underachieving receive additional support, which itself is closely monitored. This has given teachers confidence that ambitious targets for pupil achievement are, with the right strategies, achievable. Where teachers require support and advice to help them to deliver the best outcomes, it is comprehensive and readily available. Staff use their expertise and experience to develop one another's skills, and the school has a growing reputation for its capacity to deliver training to other schools.
- Middle leaders are in full command of their responsibilities. They model the best practice very well for their colleagues and carefully monitor teaching standards and pupils' progress. Improved systems in the school allow them to direct additional support to pupils precisely when required. This support embraces both those needing help in catching up and challenging booster sessions for most-able pupils.
- The school has invested a large amount of thought and creativity into developing its curriculum. It now has real breadth with the different subjects linked closely and logically together. Pupils practise writing, reading and mathematics in all subjects and reinforce what they have learned in, for example, geography, history and science. Topics unifying subjects are very international and culturally stimulating and give a broad window onto the world, enriching pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and ensuring that they are exceptionally well prepared for life in modern Britain. Activities build logically and are sustained to secure learning. For example, an explorer day – a major school event offering experiences of different countries and cultures – is then continued in an ongoing 'round the world' club.
- The pupil premium grant is used very effectively. Close monitoring ensures that support for pupils requiring it is well judged and timely; the progress made by disadvantaged pupils is outstanding. Equality of opportunity is central to the school's values. This ensures that the school enjoys harmonious relationships, that a firm stance is made against discrimination and that all pupils fulfil their potential regardless of their background
- The primary physical education and sports grant has extended the range of options to encourage pupils to participate in physical activity and to appreciate the benefits of healthy lifestyles. Specialist coaching has been provided and there is a wide range of clubs of which pupils take full advantage. School leaders have taken steps to ensure that participation in sport is general. There has been a successful drive, for example, to improve participation by girls.
- The school has worked extremely hard to develop links with all its families. Alongside formal opportunities like monthly 'pop-ins' to see their children's work, parents have the option of visits to discuss their child's progress at any time. Parents agreed that there are plentiful opportunities to volunteer in the school and several attested to the warm welcome that they have received from school leaders. In order to assist parents in supporting their children's learning, there are sessions offered to explain teaching methodology, such as phonics (the sounds that letters make) for parents of Reception children. There are multiple links between school and home. Reception children's families utilise the school's 'Wow' link so that achievement at home may be celebrated in school.
- A questionnaire, issued by the school with the same questions as Ofsted's online equivalent, Parent View, received a 53% response rate. Of the parents who responded, 97% would recommend the school to other parents. The responses to all of the questions were similarly positive, many with comments commending the school's work.
- Safeguarding procedures and practice are maintained meticulously. Staff are trained to a high standard.
- After the last inspection, the local authority provided additional support to the school. This became 'light touch' when the school was quickly judged to be making very good progress against its improvement plans. It is a token of the local reputation of the school that it has been commissioned by the local authority to provide the additional support group for children in care, in which high levels of progress have been achieved. The school has several members of staff with highly rated specialist skills and frequently provides training to colleagues in other schools.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors have used the external review of governance undertaken after the previous inspection as a springboard for improvement. They monitor all aspects of school performance with great rigour. Individual governors are linked to different aspects of the school and governing body minutes demonstrate that the challenge made to school leaders is well informed and suitably strong. Governors supported school leaders in agreeing the strategy and identifying the extra funding to allow the Year 4 and 6 classes to be split into smaller groups by resourcing two part-time teachers. This has had a very positive impact on the rate of pupils' progress.
 - Governors maintain a close oversight of senior leaders' management of teaching to ensure that teachers' pay progression reflects the impact of their teaching. They are very well informed with regard to the welfare of pupils and check that procedures for keeping children safe are maintained at a robust level.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teaching is of a consistently high standard. Teachers frequently check on pupils' progress and are able to adroitly reshape their teaching plans to provide either additional support or more challenge. Minute attention to the needs of individual pupils is a feature of the school's teaching, not least because of the work of well-trained teaching assistants who have the knowledge and skills necessary to fully support pupils' learning.
- The teaching of writing is rigorous. Teachers ensure that pupils are given the opportunity to use their writing skills in a wide range of contexts and styles. For example, in science, Year 4 work on the digestive system encompassed both drama and extended diary entries, very effectively reinforcing learning. Work on a voice-activated Trojan horse brought together IT, science and history in a creative and stimulating way.
- Teachers' advice and guidance to pupils on how they can improve their work is clear and helpful. Written marking is consistent in offering detailed advice for improvement. Homework tasks are well integrated into teachers' planning so that they provide a real extension to what has been learnt during the school day.
- The planning of teaching activities is highly integrated so that pupils' skills are well developed and consolidated. Topics in each class combine reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects. Using themes that include ancient Greece, Rome and Egypt, mathematics teaching is very thorough and driven by a determination to show that numbers and calculations have a practical purpose but can also tell a story about different cultures. Pupils calculating the equivalent value of numbers in Roman numerals did this in the context of learning about Roman history.
- Phonics is very well taught, building on the solid foundations in the early years.
- In most classes, teachers are promoting the importance of good presentation and handwriting very effectively. Pride is apparent in many books. There are, however, a small number of pupils whose presentation is not good enough, and this is hampering the quality of their work and their readiness for the next stage of education.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The habits of being successful learners are embedded early in the school. Even the youngest pupils show perseverance in doing their best to complete all work set – including that given for homework. Pupils are diligent in improving their work in response to suggestions from the teacher. They always arrive at lessons ready to learn.
- In talking about their work, pupils are confident and fluent. Older pupils were able to summarise to inspectors very succinctly what they were learning about. Inspectors observed pupils insisting – politely but determinedly – to be allowed to continue their mathematics work into break time.

- Membership of the school council and of the 'management group' of pupils is taken very seriously indeed by even the youngest. The opportunities afforded to learn to take responsibility are appreciated by pupils and families. Pupils are able to identify changes in school that they, as representatives, have suggested. They consider they have a responsibility to look after their fellow pupils and take it very seriously.
- The school values pupils' secure emotional development highly and this is developed very successfully in the context of pupils feeling very safe – something their parents strongly confirm.
- Appropriate to their ages, pupils show a thorough understanding of how to keep themselves safe. There is no evidence of any bullying in school but pupils have an understanding of its different forms – including when using computers – and complete confidence that the adults around them would be immediately responsive and helpful if there were any problems.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Lessons begin promptly because pupils are very keen. Once learning begins, pupils' attentiveness is sustained.
- Around the school, when arriving or at break or lunch or moving around the building, pupils are courteous and demonstrate a real pride in their school. They confidently share their work, their understanding and express their opinions. Good manners are always evident. Often this was exemplary, as when members of the school council and pupils' management group had assembled to meet an inspector and older pupils spontaneously vacated their seats to accommodate the youngest pupils when they arrived.
- There have been no exclusions since the last inspection. Behavioural issues of any kind have been both very minor and very few.
- Attendance is high and has maintained a strong upward trend. No groups of pupils attend less well than others.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Children join the Reception class with skills, knowledge and understanding broadly typical for their age. By the time they enter Year 1 they are very well prepared for the National Curriculum. The teaching of phonics is particularly strong and this translates into very high proportions of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Standards of reading are high in most classes, and new initiatives to raise them further are being implemented.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are rising in Key Stage 1. At the previous inspection these standards had been in decline. This was halted and the previously high levels of work are now being matched. The school's current assessment information, scrutinised by inspectors, indicates that pupils currently in Years 1 and 2 are sustaining this improving trend.
- Pupils are making very rapid progress in all year groups. The work in pupils' books indicates that many are working at above age-related expectations. Most-able pupils are making exceptionally rapid progress. For example, standards of writing for some pupils in Year 3 are already at the level expected by the end of Year 4.
- Year 6 pupils who left the school in the summer of 2015 made very good progress when they were in Years 5 and 6. This group of pupils had made too little progress during Years 3 and 4, and were in danger of significantly underachieving. They achieved the very challenging targets that were set for them, leaving school with attainment that was above the age-related expectations in reading and writing and mathematics. This represents outstanding progress and ensures that pupils are well prepared for secondary school.
- Standards in mathematics have risen rapidly and are now very high across the school. One pupil accounted for this by telling inspectors, 'I love maths, there is a new challenge every day and it is exciting.' This enthusiasm pervades mathematics lessons, especially in Years 5 and 6 where pupils respond very well to problem solving, adopting exceptionally positive attitudes to their work. As one pupil said wisely, 'A mistake is an opportunity to learn.'
- The numbers of disadvantaged pupils in each year group are small. There are some year groups in which there is no difference between the achievement of these pupils and others. In other year groups the differences are small, often associated with an individual pupil. In all year groups, disadvantaged pupils are making the same rapid progress as other pupils. Disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 last year made better progress than other pupils in the school in mathematics, and left with high standards.

- The current progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs comfortably exceeds typical expectations for all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs made exceptionally strong progress in last year's Year 6.
- Pupils' learning is strong across a wide range of subjects. Topic work, which takes in a large number of subjects, is well planned and captures pupils' interests. The study of, for example, different world religions is thought provoking and motivates pupils to produce high-quality work.
- Any pupils needing to catch up do so quickly in the context of a comprehensive programme of booster sessions and carefully targeted interventions.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- The early years provision is outstanding. Children make excellent progress. They enter the Reception class with skills and abilities that are typical for their age and reach standards above those expected for their age by the end of the year. They are well prepared for entry to their Year 1 class. All groups of children progress well.
- Assessment is well organised and focuses very precisely on the skills that individual children need to develop. Staff know children very well and cater for their needs and next steps accordingly. Information from each child's home is taken full account of and is integrated with the very careful initial assessments by the teacher. As a result, children are ready to make very good progress as soon as they arrive in the Reception class. They settle quickly and work and play with one another very well.
- Scrutiny of the children's 'learning journeys' and other observations confirm the impact that teaching is having on the development of such skills as writing, early reading, number recognition and social development.
- The classroom provides a stimulating experience for children. The teaching of phonics is of a very high standard with sounds modelled for children exceptionally accurately. As a result, children are making swift progress in reading and are enthusiastic about books and stories.
- Children are developing important learning skills. They show persistence in their activities, encouraged by a stimulating environment indoors and out. The balance between those activities that are directed by adults and those that arise from the children's own interests is very effectively managed.
- Children are secure in a safe environment and they behave very well.
- Leadership in this area is strong. The curriculum is well planned and children's learning and development are at the centre of all activities. Some of the assessments that leaders are making underestimate the levels of achievement that many children make. The proportion of children reaching a 'good level of development' in 2015 was in line with the national figure, but these children entered Year 1 with skills and abilities that were considerably higher than those expected for their age.

School details

Unique reference number	114736
Local authority	Essex County Council
Inspection number	10001961

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community School
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	209
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Kevin Plummer
Headteacher	Tracey Caffull
Telephone number	01206 250331
Website	www.greatbentley.essex.sch.uk
Email address	admin@greatbentley.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 March 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups or with a first language believed to be other than English.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium grant is below average. (The pupil premium grant provides additional funding for looked after children and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.)
- In 2014 (before changes in legislation and terminology), the proportion of pupils with additional needs and supported through school action was average. In the same year, the proportion of those either with a statement of special educational needs or support through school action plus was above average.
- The school meets the current government's floor targets. These express the minimum expectations for what pupils should achieve by the end of their time in the school.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school is commissioned by the local authority to provide regular after-school sessions for looked after children who attend schools in the area.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons, several jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and also visited smaller groups of pupils in additional sessions. They spoke with members of staff holding a range of responsibilities.
- Inspectors met with pupils formally and informally.
- Inspectors met with the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, and followed up with additional discussions. There was a meeting with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 89 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey of parental opinion, and of a further 15 written submissions made to the online commentary facility made available alongside it. There were meetings with parents, formally and informally.
- Inspectors considered the views of members of staff in all roles, expressed both via the voluntary staff questionnaire and in meetings.
- Inspectors reviewed records provided by the school, including information about pupils' progress, minutes of meetings of the governing body and documents relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors made a further visit to the school on 12 November in order to complete the inspection.

Inspection team

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