

Tiptree Heath Primary School

103 Maldon Road, Tiptree, Essex CO5 0PG

Inspection dates

2–3 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, ably supported by the governing body, has created a strong and improving culture of good teaching, learning and behaviour across the school. As a result, the school is much improved since the previous inspection.
- Leaders have managed teachers' performance very well. This has helped to bring about improvements in pupils' progress, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Governors understand their roles fully. They challenge leaders to achieve good outcomes for pupils and continually look for ways to improve the school.
- Pupils love learning. They are happy and feel safe. This view is fully supported by their parents.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are very proud of their school. Pupils show enthusiasm and commitment when learning.
- Children have a good start to school life in the Reception class. They enter Year 1 with the skills they need to be successful learners.
- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved considerably. The quality of teaching is checked regularly. Extra training is used effectively so that teaching is good and pupils are doing well.
- Teachers, together with their learning support assistants, form effective teams who meet pupils' needs well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fully supported through a well-designed and exciting range of subjects. Core values, such as responsibility, are embedded into school life and practised by adults and pupils alike. These values underpin all that the school does.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not all recognise quickly enough when pupils are ready to move on in their learning.
- The most-able pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop the ability to write at length across all subjects.
- Questions are not always sufficiently probing enough for teachers to know how to help pupils improve.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure greater consistency of high-quality teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - all teachers quickly adapt their teaching during lessons according to how well pupils are doing
 - all adults use probing questions to check and further develop pupils' understanding of what they are learning
 - all teachers provide opportunities for the most-able pupils to write at length and apply the skills they have learnt across all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders have worked hard to create an atmosphere of high expectations for pupils and staff which is reflected in pupils' respect and care for their work. This has led to good improvement since the last inspection.
- Parents speak very positively about the quality of education provided by the school. One parent wrote: 'I am extremely happy with the school, a great headteacher – all the teachers are second to none.' A very large majority would recommend the school to another parent.
- The headteacher and the effective governing body hold an accurate view of the strengths of the school and what they need to do in order to improve. This enables them to set clear priorities for improvement. They have established a climate of ambition and high expectations that promotes higher standards for pupils' academic development and prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- The management of teachers' performance is extremely rigorous. Teachers receive constructive feedback and focused effective support to help them to improve their skills. Consequently, teaching is now good. Staff say that they are proud to work at the school and agree that leaders organise training opportunities which encourage, support and challenge them to do well.
- The school is now confident in the accuracy of its assessment because its judgements have been regularly validated by external assessors, including leaders in good and outstanding schools. Governors attend the three-weekly achievement meetings where they check and challenge any underperformance.
- Leaders at all levels, including subject leaders, focus sharply on ensuring that all pupils fulfil their potential, that they have equal opportunities to prosper and that there is no discrimination.
- Partnerships with other schools are good. The school is carrying out a three-year programme, focused on developing strong teamwork across the school, brokered by the local authority. Teaching teams in each classroom, where teachers work closely with their learning support assistants, have already shown a speedier impact on improving outcomes.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to ensure that the small numbers of disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as possible; as a result, they make good progress from their starting points. Teachers give careful thought to providing just the right resources and are precise in their planning to make sure that they close any learning gaps.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. It captivates pupils' interests. Teachers ensure that learning may be hard but that it is also fun. Pupils enjoy investigating the effect of water resistance on falling objects, for example, almost as much as searching for interesting ways to describe undersea creatures. This is because of the skilful way in which their teachers present their learning. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of educational visits, which include the local castle at Colchester and the Houses of Parliament. Extra-curricular provision is plentiful; the whole curriculum offers many opportunities for enrichment and enjoyment.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strongly promoted, particularly through the school's values. Leaders see assemblies as central to the life of the school. Pupils apply their focus to the current theme of 'responsibility', where they learn to look after their own health and hygiene and keep themselves safe, especially when using the computer.
- The school is making very good use of the physical education (PE) and sports premium. The funding continues to increase pupils' participation in a range of sporting activities. Staff regularly check that as many pupils as possible are able to participate in an increasingly wide range of activities. All staff – teachers and their learning support assistants – are able to teach squash confidently. As a result, pupils' participation in sport has increased significantly. Pupils say that they would like longer PE sessions as they are 'just great and a longer lesson would mean that we could learn more!'
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors provide very effective support and challenge for the school's work through regular, focused visits. They evaluate the progress the school is making against the priorities in the school improvement plan. Governors fulfil their roles and responsibilities well, including reviewing pupils' progress very regularly. They know the school very well. As a result, they are able to hold the school stringently to account for improving the quality and impact of teaching on learning.
 - Governors manage the performance of staff, including the headteacher, rigorously. Decisions and pay increases are based on a broad range of evidence. Governors make sure that the school's resources, including additional funding, are used effectively for the benefit of all pupils.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Robust procedures are in place to check the suitability of staff and visitors to work with children. The school checks vigorously that all staff are well informed, and training in how to keep pupils safe is up to date. Parents, staff and pupils unanimously agree that the school is a safe place to be.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Improving the quality of teaching has been a major and successful focus since the last inspection. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils should achieve throughout the school. As a result of high expectations of presentation, pupils' work is carefully drafted. Books are respected and presented well.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan sequences of lessons well to enable pupils to learn effectively. Wherever possible, teachers make learning fun, engaging and interesting. They set high expectations for behaviour and usually challenge pupils' thinking in lessons. Pupils say that, 'We try our best and when we do, our teachers know'.
- Teachers plan good levels of support for pupils who need to catch up quickly, disadvantaged pupils and those who are disabled or have special educational needs. Learning support assistants work closely with teachers to make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.
- Teachers apply the school's marking policy consistently across the whole school, including in the Reception class. Pupils say that, 'The comments our teachers make really help us. We are always given time to read them.'
- Staff take every opportunity to practise and refine phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) with children in their first years at school wherever they can. Younger pupils apply this knowledge to their writing, which is taught effectively.
- Teachers set homework that stimulates pupils' learning. An overwhelming majority of parents agree that their child receives appropriate homework for their age. Pupils say that they enjoy homework and particularly like gaining certificates, which recognise how well they are learning their mathematics.
- Parents agree that the school provides them with accurate and detailed information about how well their children are progressing and what they need to do next in order to improve. Older pupils endorse this and say that, 'Our purple polishing pens help us to edit our work successfully'.
- Teachers generally use questions effectively to probe pupils' understanding so that they are able to build on what they already know and deepen their knowledge. Sometimes, however, teachers do not sufficiently reshape learning activities to ensure that pupils are challenged to think as hard as they could.
- In a few cases, some lesson time is not used effectively when teachers fail to spot whether pupils understand or find the work too easy and are ready to move on.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Parents agree that their children enjoy school and feel safe. Parents say that their children are prepared well for moving on to secondary school.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They are positive about many aspects of school life and some find it hard to think of only one or two things that are the best things. They agree that pupils at Tiptree Heath are 'very friendly' and inspectors agree.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the different forms of bullying although they say that this only happens rarely at the school. They know exactly what to do if it did happen and who to go to for help. Pupils also know that falling out with their friends is not the same as bullying.
- Relationships between staff and school leaders are positive. Many staff agree that they feel valued and well supported to improve. One commented that, 'The staff here work really well as a team, especially when school improvement is involved. Any issues in the school are discussed and resolved to everyone's best ability'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.

- The school's strapline, that this is a 'happy, caring and friendly school, a place where we all work together' is evident everywhere. The school is a well-organised and attractive place for learning.
- Attendance has improved steadily since the last inspection and is above the national average for primary schools. Leaders check pupils' attendance rigorously, following up any concerns that may arise. During the inspection, nearly all classes were full.
- The vast majority of parents agree that pupils are well behaved; pupils agree with them. They say that if there is a disturbance or falling out on the playground it is dealt with immediately by the adults.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school because relationships are positive and staff expectations are clear. Learning support assistants are also lunchtime supervisors and pupils respect them. They like the choices they have at lunchtimes, from table tennis to basketball. Pupils understand the school's expectations for good behaviour and are keen to do well. Only in a few lessons, where teachers fail to realise that pupils are ready to move on in their learning, does pupils' attention waiver and they lose their concentration.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Following a disappointing fall in standards for older pupils in 2015, current assessment systems are rigorous and information about pupils' progress is checked thoroughly every three weeks by school leaders, including governors. If any pupil of any ability is at risk of falling behind, teaching and learning are immediately adapted and the impact is checked closely. This vigorous focus on improving has had a very positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning.
- Current pupils in all year groups are developing secure knowledge, skills and understanding regardless of their starting points. Any gaps in their knowledge and misunderstandings are quickly identified and remedied.
- The work produced by pupils in their books confirms that they are making good progress across all year groups in a range of subjects. This is the case for girls as well as boys.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. They join school with skills that are broadly typical for their age in most areas of learning and make good progress so that most reach a good level of development.
- Pupils learn phonics well. This is seen in the 100% success rate in the phonics check by the end of Year 2 for two consecutive years. Pupils love reading. 'Reading Champions' are celebrated every week in assembly. Pupils enjoy a wide range of authors and are excited by their favourite books. Books are respected and valued throughout the school and not just in the well-used library.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good, because their needs are quickly identified. Support is then tailored exactly to their needs. Teachers, together with skilled learning support assistants, plan work at just the right level of difficulty.
- From their starting points, the small numbers of disadvantaged pupils often make better progress throughout the school than other pupils in their age group because good support is provided to meet their needs. The progress of those pupils who need to catch up is checked very regularly and extra help is given if necessary.
- Pupils make good progress in physical education and stay fit and healthy because the school makes good use of its primary sports funding. Pupils enjoy opportunities to learn golf, table tennis, fencing, cricket, gymnastics and squash. Pupils are very successful in competitive games and have performed well in local tournaments for football and rounders. They won the local mini league for squash.
- Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their learning. They are keen to point out that there are expected learning behaviours in every classroom. Evidence in books shows that the more-able pupils do not yet extend their skills and abilities as well as they could in their writing as they are not given enough opportunities to write at length, particularly across other subjects.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years provision is very well led and managed. Staff know the children very well. They work successfully with parents where good levels of communication enable children to settle quickly and get off to a flying start. Staff ensure that children's health, safety and well-being are of the utmost importance. They successfully provide children with a safe, secure, attractive and enjoyable learning environment.

Parents are all very complimentary about the Reception experience their children are receiving.

- Children make at least good progress from their starting points and a high proportion leave Reception with skills and abilities expected for their age. High-quality adult support ensures that, where children have lower starting points, they make exceptional progress. Owing to the wide range of opportunities they are offered, children become more confident and curious learners. As a result, they are well prepared for Year 1.
- Children know and follow well-established routines. Reading is taught effectively. Children say they 'love listening to stories'. They successfully sort through sets of real and non-real words linked to the alien babies which have hatched from eggs left by their mother for safety in their classroom. Several children showed an inspector the 'special' letter that the alien mother wrote to Little Scarlet class.
- Teaching is good. Teamwork between the teacher and learning support assistant is strong. Staff are particularly successful in creating a welcoming and stimulating environment. Most learning is skilfully developed by adults as the children play because they have accurately identified the things that each child needs to learn next.
- Children behave well in the early years because activities are interesting and fun, so they are kept engaged in their learning. They work and play together well, demonstrating good personal and social development. Most have a good awareness of their own safety and that of their classmates. Staff take every opportunity to remind children how to keep safe.
- Classroom and outside areas are well organised and tidy so that children can play happily and learn well. Children have plenty of opportunities to practise their newly learnt writing and mathematical skills, as well as other curriculum areas, both inside and outside. Additional funding for those children who are disadvantaged is used effectively so that gaps in learning have already closed.
- The curriculum is well planned and organised so that children receive a good mix of quality, adult-led sessions together with many experiences where they can choose to learn for themselves.

School details

Unique reference number	114733
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10001934

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Puttick
Headteacher	Tracey Oram
Telephone number	01621 815445
Website	www.tiptreeheath.essex.sch.uk
Email address	admin@tiptreeheath.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 December 2013

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. No pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and of those who have special educational needs are below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who receive support from pupil premium funding is below average. The pupil premium is extra funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations set for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Since the previous inspection, the school received two monitoring visits by Ofsted to determine how much progress it was making in meeting its areas for improvement.
- Since the last inspection there have been a high number of changes in the staff.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 10 lessons across all age groups in the school; some lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Inspectors also made other visits to classes, looked at pupils' work in books as well as examples of pupils' work in subjects other than English and mathematics. They listened to several pupils read.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, subject leaders, a representative of the local authority, pupils and governors. Inspectors talked informally to pupils at lunch and breaktimes, and observed them in assembly and around the school.
- Inspectors examined the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress for different year groups and in different subjects. This included information about progress in the early years.
- A number of documents were evaluated, including safeguarding policies and procedures, the school improvement plan and the school's evaluation of its own work. Checks on teachers' effectiveness and records relating to behaviour and attendance figures were also made.
- Inspectors met informally with parents at the beginning of the school day. Inspectors took account of the 62 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as individual communications with parents. The responses to 13 staff questionnaires were also considered.

Inspection team

Gay Whent, lead inspector

Janet Tomkins

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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