

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Roger Barber
Headteacher
Vigo Village School
Erskine Road
Vigo
Meopham
Gravesend
Kent
DA13 0RL

Dear Mr Barber

Short inspection of Vigo Village School

Following my visit to the school on Tuesday 23 February 2016, 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

At the time of the last inspection, the inspector recognised many strong qualities of the school. These included clear leadership and committed staff, resulting in good-quality teaching and learning and steadily improving standards. The safe environment and the high quality of care, guidance and support were particularly commended. You have maintained these strengths despite several changes in staffing. Vigo Village School is a happy place; relationships are positive and children achieve well. There is a strong, caring ethos underpinned by the school's values and a focus on ensuring that each pupil develops into a well-rounded individual. Staff, governors and pupils are proud to be part of the school community.

The last inspection highlighted several areas for improvement. These were: to increase the influence and impact of subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator; ensure consistently strong teaching; ensure better continuity between Key Stages 1 and 2; develop stronger partnerships outside the school and pupils' understanding of cultural differences. You have addressed these improvement points effectively. Senior leaders are well trained, experienced and influential. They analyse assessment information, provide support for their colleagues, check regularly on the quality of learning, identify priorities for improvement and implement strategies to address relative weaknesses. The issue relating to continuity between the key stages has been addressed through strengthening the teaching at

the end of Key Stage 1. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 had been weak in the past. You, and the governors, made this the school's number one priority for improvement. This strong focus and strengthened teaching in Key Stage 1 last year resulted in a sharp rise in pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills. This means that the current Year 3 pupils are better equipped to meet the demands of the Key Stage 2 curriculum. Over the past two years, there has been a strongly improving upward trend in the proportion of children leaving Reception having achieved the knowledge and skills expected for their age. Similarly, the results of the Year 1 early reading check are higher than average and rising. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 vary from year to year but pupils continue to make good progress from their different starting points. No one is complacent and you are keen to make sure that the school continues to improve. We noted that sometimes pupils are not given enough opportunities to use and apply what they know in different contexts or work at greater length.

You have established good relationships with parents, who are overwhelmingly positive about the school and would recommend it to others. You also have productive relationships with external agencies and collaborate with a group of local rural schools to share ideas, expertise and good practice. You are aware that developing pupils' understanding of different cultures continues to be a little less strong than their social, moral and spiritual development. You are seeking to address this by building into the curriculum more opportunities to find out about different cultures. You work hard to encourage all pupils to attend school every day and, although attendance remains below average, it is improving slowly. The proportion of pupils that regularly take time off is also reducing but there is still a small group, particularly boys and disadvantaged pupils, who have too much time off school.

All of the parents who responded to Parent View, and those I met at the start of the day, said their children were safe, happy, well cared for and well behaved in school. There are very few incidents of poor behaviour, bullying or racism and those that do happen are very thoroughly dealt with. Pupils who have particular behavioural needs are well supported so that their behaviour improves. Pupils socialise well, play happily together and enjoy each other's company. The adults model good manners and respectful behaviour and the pupils respond well to gentle reminders. Attitudes to learning are also positive and pupils are keen to do well.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding policies are up to date and in line with the most recent guidance. Leaders carry out careful checks to make sure that all members of staff are suitably qualified to work with children. Governors regularly check the recording systems and are well informed about any concerns, and the actions taken, relating to pupils' safety, welfare and behaviour. Staff receive regular training; the most recent took place last term and focused on aspects such as the dangers of extremism. Internet safety is also highlighted in displays around the school. You and a governor also carry out regular health and safety checks and take action quickly to remedy any faults. As a result, the school is a well-cared-for, safe environment.

Inspection findings

- You and senior leaders provide good support for your colleagues. This has been particularly important this year with several colleagues who are new to the school. Senior leaders regularly check how well pupils are achieving and take prompt action to ensure that improvements happen. You report this information to the governors and they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The special needs coordinator works well with her colleagues, identifying any pupils who require additional support, and checks that support activities are resulting in pupils making sufficient progress. For example, enhanced one-to-one reading support has resulted in pupils making exceptionally rapid progress. You and the staff have productive relationships with external agencies and specialists, for example speech therapists. This close attention to meeting individual needs ensures that all groups of pupils make good progress.
- The early years leader has carefully analysed strengths and weaknesses from the past and also closely assessed the current Reception children's skills and knowledge. The Reception team have altered the way they plan in order to build on the interests and achievements of the children. They include everyday challenges to deepen the children's learning. As a result, there is a lovely buzz about this part of the school.
- During the visit, Reception children thoroughly enjoyed the playdough disco activities to strengthen their fingers. They also sang lustily and joined in with action songs. Children's achievements are recorded in learning journals and some parents contribute to these by adding activities and achievements out of school. There are good transition arrangements, particularly to support children arriving in Reception so that they settle quickly. Several parents commented on the positive impact of this.
- Throughout the school, pupils are attentive, respond quickly to good routines and are keen to complete their work. Some, particularly boys, commented that they really enjoy mathematics. Teachers and pupils use the correct vocabulary to discuss and explain mathematical thinking. The pupils' books show that they cover a good range of activities in mathematics to build up their basic mathematical knowledge. There is less evidence of pupils having opportunities to think about how to use their mathematical knowledge to solve different problems.
- During the visit, Year 6 pupils shared some high-quality writing which showed that they are able to use techniques to build suspense and tension in a story. Year 2 pupils enjoyed thinking of similes to describe a princess and especially enjoyed thinking of some quite disgusting similes to describe an ogre. One told me that although the ogre was ugly on the outside, he was nice on the inside, so they are clearly developing an understanding of character and nuance.
- There are good examples of writing woven through other subjects such as the older pupils' 'Oaths to my Country', which show a developing understanding of how they can demonstrate different values. There is also some good evidence of interesting homework activities such as where pupils gathered information and recollections from older family members about the Second World War.

- Leaders have identified that older pupils are not producing enough extended writing, however; across subjects there is a tendency in all classes for pupils to produce fairly short pieces of work. This suggests that there is an unwritten expectation that a page a lesson is sufficient. In some of the writing books, although the quality is often good, there are a lot of short pieces and very few extended pieces of writing. In all subjects, there is too little evidence of pupils being challenged to develop their own ideas, find things out for themselves, enquire, reason or use the knowledge they already have to solve problems.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should:

- improve attendance and reduce the number of pupils who take a lot of time off school
- provide more opportunities and greater challenge for pupils to use their initiative, make decisions and extend their learning.

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

Sheena MacDonald

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the mathematics and English subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and the early years leader. I also met with two members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. You and I visited most of the teaching groups during the day, to observe the quality of teaching and learning, and I had lunch with the children. I looked at a sample of writing, mathematics and topic books. I took account of four staff responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 24 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire), and spoke to parents at the start of the school day. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about teaching, children's achievement, safeguarding checks, policies, and procedures. I also looked at, and discussed with you, the evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the current improvement plans.