

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



15 April 2016

Miss Eileen Rogers
Headteacher
Gorse Ride Infants' School
Gorse Ride South
Finchampstead
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG40 4EH

Dear Miss Rogers

Short inspection of Gorse Ride Infants' School

Following my visit to the school on 22 March 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 February 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You lead the school with clear vision, ensuring that all members of the school community continuously improve their practice so that the school can become outstanding in the future. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's many strengths and pinpoint areas for further development accurately. Staff unanimously agree that the school has improved under your leadership and feel supported in their work. Parents view the school as a 'pillar of the community' and value the quality of teaching that the school provides. One parent commented that, 'From the headteacher down, there is a passion for learning that is passed on to pupils.'

Pupils enjoy school and achieve well because leaders underpin the curriculum with high levels of ambition for every child. Leaders promote core values such as 'grow, respect and succeed', and seek a range of opportunities to raise pupils' aspirations for themselves. An example of this is in the 'Dare to Dream' week, where visitors share a range of careers with pupils. Leaders ensure that there are carefully chosen opportunities within the curriculum to widen pupils' experiences of life beyond their own community, such as developing links with Busu Village in Uganda. In addition, links across the curriculum are exploited fully to inspire pupils' independent research and enquiry. Recently, pupils built models of Tudor houses as part of a home learning project linked to their 'Fire of London' topic.

At the last inspection, inspectors identified the need to extend the curriculum for children in early years. Inspectors also asked leaders to increase the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels in mathematics and to ensure that the teaching of reading in Year 1 was as rigorous as in Year 2. Leaders have tackled these areas effectively, so that:

- areas of learning are promoted equally across the early years provision, with stimulating and engaging use of resources to interest pupils of all abilities
- children learn independently, challenging themselves to solve problems in a widened range of areas, including knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development
- pupils who are more able on entry to key stage 1 continue to make good progress, because teaching extends their mathematical reasoning and helps them to work systematically
- pupils make good progress in reading in Year 1 because phonics (the sounds that letters make) is well taught.

Although the proportions of pupils meeting the early learning goal at the end of early years continue to rise, boys are not as well prepared for key stage 1 as girls, particularly in communication and language.

Leaders and governors ensure that the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is evaluated and reported to parents. Disadvantaged pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics is rising so that it is closer to the achievement of other pupils nationally. However, this is not the case for writing, where gaps widened in 2015.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders take a proactive approach to keeping children safe. Staff receive regular, relevant training and leaders ensure that the latest guidance is shared and considered in a timely way. Current policies reflect the most recent legislation, and leaders understand new duties well. Staff are alert to unusual patterns of absence from school and follow these up quickly. Pupils' attendance has improved because these checks are made thoroughly and parents receive appropriate support if they find it difficult to ensure that their children are at school regularly. The school works in close and effective partnership with external agencies to ensure that actions are taken to reduce any risk of harm for vulnerable children. Governors undertake their statutory responsibilities for safeguarding conscientiously. They ensure that all arrangements are robust and rightly challenge published local authority policies where these do not meet requirements.

Inspection findings

- Since the previous inspection in 2011, your determined work to drive improvement has ensured that pupils make an increasingly successful start to their time at school. Pupils' progress has been strengthened, particularly at transition points between Nursery, Reception and Year 1.
- Senior leaders make careful checks, using a range of information, so that they can evaluate the impact of the actions that they take. They lead by example, providing exemplar lessons and regular feedback to staff to shape and improve their practice. This has ensured that key aspects of provision, such as the teaching of phonics and the development of the curriculum in early years, have strengthened quickly.
- Together with governors, senior leaders advocate ambition on behalf of the pupils in the school. Parents are rightly proud of the school and the individual attention that their children receive to help them succeed. Parents say that 'children are proud to wear their uniform'.
- Leaders make good use of the accurate information that you collect about pupils' achievement, to support discussion with staff about any barriers to learning that pupils may have.
- Leaders commit to ensuring that pupils who receive additional funding make rapid progress, and react quickly to change programmes of support where this is not the case. Gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics are closing as a result. This is not the case in writing, which received less specific focus until recently.
- Governors challenge leaders effectively and ensure that the performance of staff is managed robustly. They know the school well, bringing a wealth of relevant skill and experience to the governance role. Their work across the federation enables them to maintain a clear oversight of the full journey of each pupil from the time that they start school.
- Children make a good start in the early years, and are well prepared for key stage 1 because the curriculum across all areas of learning interests and engages them. Thinking skills are strengthened through well-chosen activities which encourage children to solve problems independently. In Reception, children used a range of jugs, spoons and bowls to transfer coloured ice cubes between them. These cubes contained a hidden animal, which children had to 'release'. Children debated options and decided that they needed some warm water to melt the ice. Their squeals of delight, when they were successful, demonstrated that learning had been both powerful and rewarding.
- Pupils show enthusiasm for the topics that they study. Recently, pupils' study of the fire of London strengthened their use of historical evidence. Pupils engaged in animated conversation about how the fire started, referring to eye witness accounts and opinion of the day. Writing opportunities in this topic strengthened pupils' use of accurate sentences to report and explain because teachers reinforced spelling and punctuation skills directly.

- In mathematics, most-able pupils are challenged by the carefully chosen questions that teachers pose. Pupils consider a range of approaches and work systematically to find solutions as a result. In Year 1, pupils were seen using this approach well when identifying combinations of coins that could be used to total 50 pence. Teaching expectations remained high and pupils were challenged to find combinations with as few coins as possible using smaller denominations.
- More pupils reached the expected standard in phonics in 2015 than in the two previous years because high-quality training improved teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogy. All sessions seen were exemplary in securing rapid recall of sounds and providing opportunities for pupils to apply these accurately when reading or writing individual words. Teachers pronounced sounds clearly, picked up misconceptions quickly and tackled alternative spellings carefully so that pupils made good progress within sessions.
- The proportion of pupils securing a good level of development has risen and is now above the national average. However, boys' progress in communication, literacy and language is not as rapid as girls' progress. Opportunities to develop boys' early writing skills are clearly evident, although boys did not select these independently. Teachers capture children's experiences through their observations, but do not evaluate their skill level precisely enough so that they can plan their next steps and target gaps in boys' knowledge.
- Pupils behave well and know how to resolve the very occasional minor conflicts that happen between them. They are considerate of others and enjoy learning and playing together. They enjoy roles of responsibility, such as being a member of the school council, because it gives them an active voice in decisions that are made. Recently, pupils provided design suggestions for improvements to the markings on the playground. They say they are pleased with the end result and enjoy the new games that they can play as a result of the changes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers in early years use their observations to identify and then address any gaps in boys' skills, knowledge and understanding so that their achievement matches that of girls, particularly in communication, literacy and language
- disadvantaged pupils achieve at least as well as other pupils nationally in writing by the end of key stage 1.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the director of children's services for Wokingham Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Abigail Wilkinson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other leaders, pupils and seven governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with a representative of the local authority. I visited all classes in the school, with senior leaders. We observed phonics groups across the school, including those led by teaching assistants. I took account of 16 responses to the school's internal staff survey and 67 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, I considered 42 responses by pupils to their online survey and a further 67 written comments from parents. I spoke with a group of pupils from key stage 1. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' checks on pupils' current performance, the school improvement plan, leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and safeguarding policies and procedures. I looked at samples of pupils' work in writing and mathematics and scrutinised learning journeys. I discussed your own evaluation of the school's performance with you.