

King's Farm Primary School

Cedar Avenue, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 5JT

Inspection dates

18–19 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have ensured that the school is much improved from when it was previously inspected. Better teaching has meant that the wide gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills are closing. However, pupils still need to catch up with other pupils nationally in all subjects.
- Too few pupils achieve high standards by the end of key stage 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Activities do not stretch the most-able pupils to their full capacity.
- The quality of teaching is variable and not enough is securely good. Teachers do not consistently use assessment information to plan tasks that build on pupils' prior learning well enough.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is increasing but remains too low.

The school has the following strengths

- Since the last inspection, leaders have relentlessly driven improvement. Their accurate knowledge of the school, and the highly positive ethos they have created, is helping to promote further improvement.
- The consultant headteacher responded to the previous inspection with determination and has a clear and uncompromising vision that promotes the achievement of every child within a caring community. This vision is shared by staff.
- Governance is excellent. Governors use their wide ranging skills to the best advantage of the school. They monitor the school closely and provide very effective challenge and support for school leaders.
- Children make a good start to their learning in the
- Senior and middle leaders are skilfully leading their areas of responsibility so that pupils are receiving an engaging and exciting curriculum.
- Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils are well supported and, as a result, they now achieve as well as other pupils in the school.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is highly successful and is a strong feature of the school. Relationships between pupils and staff are very strong and the school's seven values pervade the school.
- The school works very well with a range of other organisations to meet the diverse needs of its pupils. The school's care for its pupils' welfare is outstanding.

early years.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics, in order to improve outcomes for pupils, by:
 - making sure that teachers have an accurate understanding of what pupils already know and can do and adapt tasks to meet their needs
 - ensuring the tasks teachers plan offer sufficient challenge so that the most-able pupils achieve the higher levels.
- Ensure that even more pupils attend school regularly, including those pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since the last inspection, the school has been transformed. The inspirational and highly effective consultant headteacher, deployed to the school by the local authority, quickly stabilised the school after it was placed into special measures in October 2014. She set out to successfully create a culture of mutual respect, raised expectations and high ambition. This rapid improvement was enabled by the partnership with Ifield School (a special school) in a federation from September 2015. This brought the visionary oversight of the executive headteacher and insightful governance.
- The school is exceptionally well led by the consultant headteacher. She has high expectations of pupils and staff and there is a relentless focus on ensuring all aspects of the school continually improve. Staff morale and relationships within the school are very positive. The staff who completed a survey as part of the inspection overwhelmingly support the school's leaders and feel proud to work at the school.
- The executive headteacher ably supported the school during the year following the previous inspection, as a national leader for education from adjacent Ifield School. Her commitment to improved standards at King's Farm School drove the establishment of The Cedar Federation, with a single, new governing body. King's Farm School benefits from the expertise and capacity of leaders across the federation, who have worked alongside leaders in King's Farm to lead rapid improvement. The head of school designate, who has worked at the school since January, is flourishing in his role and is well prepared for the leadership transition when the consultant headteacher leaves at the end of this academic year.
- The school is now a happy and safe place for children and pupils and teaching has improved considerably. Senior and middle leaders have a good understanding of what is going well within the school and what needs to be even better. Leaders show relentless determination to identify and address weaknesses. They are uncompromising in their expectation that all teaching should be at least good, because they believe their pupils deserve the best education possible. Leaders' search for teachers of the highest quality has led to a high turnover of staff. As a result, many classes have been taught by two or three different teachers since September, which has resulted in some inconsistencies in teaching. Parents, who mostly fully support the school's leaders, have some concerns about the unsettling effect this has on their children. Staffing is now settling and the quality of teaching is improving. However, it is not yet highly effective across the school.
- Leaders' thorough monitoring of the impact of teaching and learning identifies areas for improvement quickly. Well-targeted training is then used to improve teachers' practice. For example, during the autumn, a programme of phonics training for teachers and teaching assistants led to improvements in reading across the school. Also during the autumn, there was considerable bespoke coaching for teachers to help them improve the quality of pupils' writing. By January, pupils were making faster progress in reading and writing than mathematics and leaders took prompt action to address this. A senior leader from Ifield School, with expertise in mathematics, worked collaboratively with leaders and teachers to develop consistent practice which provides greater challenge, especially for most-able pupils. This new mathematics policy has had a positive effect in a short time, but it is too soon to evaluate its full impact.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and the family support worker (FSW) provide appropriate, compassionate and effective support for a wide and diverse range of pupils. The SENCo carefully checks the impact of steps taken to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs or disability. Teachers are well informed about strategies to use. Well-targeted training is improving the skills of teaching assistants. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs or disability are now making progress at a similar rate to their peers.
- The leaders of the early years and key stage 1 are working hard to drive improvement. Successful and well-established practice in the Nursery has been introduced to Reception classes. Changes to staffing in Reception have now enabled rapid and secure improvements to take place. Similarly, the key stage 1 leader's passion and high expectations are clear, and outcomes have rapidly improved for Year 2 pupils, who have had stable teaching all year. However, she was unable to lead effectively the necessary improvements in phonics until recent staffing changes to both Year 1 classes. This strong leadership lower down the school means that children and pupils are better prepared for the next phase of their education.
- Leaders keep a close check on the learning of each pupil in the school. They are acutely aware that pupils in key stage 2, especially Year 6, have significant gaps due to previously poor teaching. An impressive range of interventions take place to help many pupils catch up. Leaders arrange for specialist staff to work with small groups of all ages to inspire them, improve their knowledge and understanding and develop their confidence. Pupils participating in such groups spoke gleefully about their learning.

- The subject leader for physical education has improved the use of additional sports funding to increase pupils' participation in sporting and physical activity. Investment in equipment, better teaching and specialist coaching has led to higher standards of performance. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the increased range of sports activities available at break, lunchtime and after school.
- The curriculum is varied and interesting. Subject leaders have revised the curriculum to meet new national requirements and have managed this change to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils in each age group can achieve. A science specialist has overhauled the curriculum so that pupils are inquisitive and excited about investigations. School leaders enrich pupils' experiences of other cultures and faiths through a wide programme of visits and visitors to the school. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular clubs. Parents and members of the local community increasingly participate in enrichment activities.
- Creativity pervades the school. This is illustrated by magnificent displays which celebrate pupils' work and also the imaginative approaches used to help pupils learn well. Leaders encourage staff to try different ways to excite and engage pupils. An art specialist has led the school's contribution to the town's 'Owl and the Pussycat' project. This included stunning art work, textiles, music and dance. An extraordinary knitted patchwork river on display was created by pupils, parents and members of the local church community. Singing has been energised by a music specialist, demonstrated by a rendition of Frère Jacques in two parts, with Year 6 singing in the minor key convincingly during assembly.
- The school works very effectively to promote equality of opportunity. It makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds show respect for pupils with other faiths, cultures and lifestyles. There are many displays about different faiths around the school, including a prayer tree in the school hall. During a spiritually uplifting assembly, pupils sang songs about their school confidently and with pride. They displayed awe and wonder as they reflected on their place in the natural world. Pupils' understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, tolerance and respect are strong because these values are reinforced through the curriculum and throughout every aspect of school life.
- The school enjoys a productive relationship with the local authority. The deployment of the consultant headteacher was pivotal to improving the school. Advisers provide useful support, particularly for the early years. The school has commissioned further support from local authority advisers where it has high impact, including the use of English as an additional language.
- **The governance of the school**
 - A year after the previous inspection, a new governing body for the federation was set up, led by an astute chair of governors. A King's Farm improvement group was created under the leadership of the chair of governors. This group has sharpened considerably the governors' monitoring and evaluation of the school's effectiveness.
 - The governing body makes a highly effective contribution to the overall leadership of the school. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and also areas which could be improved. They are ambitious and use their detailed knowledge of pupils' progress to challenge school leaders rigorously.
 - Governors' wide ranging expertise is used effectively to check and support different aspects of the school's work. They are highly motivated and participate in training and development to enhance their skills and ensure their development matches the school's priorities.
 - Governors ensure the school is held to account for the effective use of funding, including the sports and pupil premium funding. Governors have ensured that pay increases for teachers are only awarded when staff are effective in their work, including in securing good achievement among pupils.
 - Governors visit the school frequently to meet pupils and staff and see for themselves how staff are implementing changes.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There are comprehensive systems in place to keep pupils and staff safe. The school's checks on the suitability of staff are well managed and regularly reviewed by a governor. Governors and staff are appropriately trained, so that they know their responsibilities well. As a result, pupils feel very well cared for and safe. Pupils of all ages are able to explain what they should do if they have a concern and who they should speak to. The family support worker is tenacious in following up on any referral to other agencies and the school works very well with local partners. Consequently, there is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The considerable improvements to teaching seen over the past 18 months have not yet had time to impact fully on outcomes for pupils. As a result, though getting better, the performance of pupils still lags behind that of similar pupils in other schools nationally.
- Leaders have implemented a new assessment system for checking how well each pupil is doing. This provides teachers with clear information about what pupils know, understand and can do. It shows wide variation between pupils and across subjects. Teachers are now working to close gaps in pupils' knowledge caused by very weak teaching over time.
- Teachers do not use the information they have about pupils to consistently set work at an appropriate level for pupils. Sometimes, the most-able pupils have to complete work at lower ability levels before going onto more challenging tasks and so do not make as much progress as they are capable of. At other times, pupils are presented with challenging tasks which they are not yet equipped to tackle, or moved on too quickly, before they have a secure knowledge and understanding of the basics.
- Where teaching is most effective, pupils are set tasks which provide plenty of opportunities to deepen learning and they can achieve well. In some classes, activities are well-matched to pupils' starting points and questioning extends pupils' understanding and so they achieve well. During a Year 4 lesson on fractions and decimal equivalents, skilful questioning by the teacher required the most-able pupils to tussle with abstract concepts and at the same time allowed others to reinforce more concrete learning. As Year 6 analysed poetry, the teacher probed pupils' previous experience which awakened their knowledge of different genres and techniques. Constant pushing for the next level challenged pupils, including the most able, to think deeply.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters represent) has improved. As a result, pupils are more confident readers. Pupils are increasingly applying their reading skills across all aspects of their learning and there are many opportunities to practise their reading. For example, a group of Year 5 pupils were diligently running their daily lunchtime 'reading café' where they listen to younger and less confident pupils read aloud.
- The teaching of writing has significantly improved due to a more systematic approach, coupled with a range of interventions to help pupils catch up. Year 5 pupils wrote a personal response to a Beatles song, paying careful attention to use of language techniques and conscientiously checking their work. However, standards are not yet consistently in line with those expected for their age, especially in classes which have experienced changes to teachers.
- Improvements in the teaching of mathematics have been slower, but progress has now picked up following the implementation of a new mathematics policy. This has led to improvements in the application of mathematical skills across the school. However, in some classes teachers' expectations are still too low, particularly for the most-able pupils who do not grapple with new concepts or build on what they already know regularly enough. There are too few opportunities for pupils, again particularly for the most able, to solve problems that are more complex and demonstrate their reasoning prowess.
- Specialist teachers in music, art and science provide strong subject knowledge. They use these subjects to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
- Feedback in accordance with the school's policy is regular but not always effective in guiding pupils about how to improve their work. As a result, pupils do not always know what they need to do to progress well towards meeting their targets. In addition, pupils in some classes do not always read teachers' comments written in their books and act on the guidance given.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and productive. Teachers work closely with their teaching assistants. Teaching assistants know the pupils well. They make a valuable contribution to the care and development of pupils who need to catch up and those who have special educational needs or disability. As a result, these pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Regular opportunities are provided for parents to meet their child's teachers to discuss the progress they make. Parents who had attended these sessions found them very helpful. Parents of Year 2 pupils described how much they enjoy and learn through attending homework club weekly with their children.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. As a result, pupils are happy and feel safe.
- There is a strong sense of community, based on the school's seven values. Pupils who met inspectors could enthusiastically describe examples of aspiration, courage, creativity, honesty, kindness, respect and responsibility. Year 5 pupils took their responsibilities as play leaders and reading mentors very seriously. Kindness and respect were evident in the harmonious atmosphere around the school.
- Pupils attending breakfast club benefit from the healthy food and positive start to their day.
- Great care is shown to all pupils, including impressive support for those facing challenges. Staff in the school show a relentless determination to help every pupil overcome difficulties they face and this is building the self-confidence of vulnerable pupils. The family support worker, SENCo and attendance officer show extensive knowledge of the pupils. They work very effectively with a range of outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive the care and support they require.
- Arrangements to support pupils who join the school during the year are excellent. Many arrive speaking little or no English. The patience and reassurance offered by staff across the school helps newly arrived pupils to settle quickly. Several parents expressed gratitude at the warm welcome their children received by the whole school community.
- Pupils are very supportive of each other, including those from Ifield School. A Year 4 pupil spoke for many as she explained, 'disabled or not, any child can go to either school and they will help you. We all get along with each other really well'.
- Over time, pupils' self-assurance has grown noticeably. Pupils speak confidently to adults and greet visitors warmly and politely. During the inspection, pupils participated enthusiastically in a joyful singing assembly. This contributed well to their confidence to perform.
- Safeguarding is given the highest priority. Leaders ensure that staff are trained carefully to detect signs of pupils at risk. They also ensure that pupils receive teaching which helps them to know how to stay safe in a range of situations, including online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are proud to be members of King's Farm Primary School. They are polite to each other and visitors, opening doors and showing good manners at all times.
- Since the last inspection, there have been significant improvements in pupils' conduct around the school. It is a calm, orderly place where the vast majority of pupils cooperate well with each other and adults. Good routines have been established in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. Play and lunchtimes are supervised well. In the dining hall, pupils sit and eat in friendly groups and display good table manners.
- Occasionally in lessons, when teaching lacks challenge, some pupils' attention wanes and they lose concentration.
- Attendance at the school is improving, although is still below the national average. Despite persistent and coordinated action to rectify the issue, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains very low.

Outcomes for pupils require improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because not enough pupils attain the standards expected for their age. In 2015, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at both key stages 1 and 2 was significantly below that seen nationally.
- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability, are now making much better progress than in the past. However, in Year 6, despite a concerted effort by staff and pupils, some pupils have been unable to catch up from low starting points and achieve what is expected at their stage of development.
- In 2015, the proportion of children in the early years who achieved a good level of development by the end of their Reception year was well below the national average. Standards are now rising rapidly with a much higher proportion on course to reach the expected standard this year.

- In 2015, standards in the Year 1 phonics check were well below the national average. Leaders prioritised this weakness and teachers and teaching assistants throughout the school have benefited from training. The school's information shows that children are acquiring the skills needed for success in reading more rapidly than in the past. During the inspection, pupils in key stage 2 read to inspectors with confidence and sensitivity, showing good skills in skimming and scanning.
- In Year 2, consistently stronger teaching throughout the year has enabled pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to make up gaps in their learning. The school's current information and work in books shows that many more pupils are on track to achieve age-related expectations. Throughout key stage 1, pupils make stronger progress in reading than in writing.
- In key stage 2, standards are rising in reading, writing and mathematics. More pupils are achieving the standard expected for their age. However, in all subjects, only a few pupils achieve high levels. Additional sessions are provided for the most-able pupils which helps a few achieve a high standard of work, but these pupils are not consistently stretched in lessons.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are supported well in the school. Their progress is increasing in line with other pupils in the school. The performance of pupils who speak English as an additional language is improving. Some are bilingual and switch between languages easily. Others are at an early stage of learning English and do well with the effective focused support given in lessons and to small groups.

Early years provision

is good

- Children enter the early years with skills and abilities that are below those typical for their age. In 2015, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development was below the national average. The school's own information suggests that children currently in the early years, including those who are disadvantaged, are making faster progress than previous groups so that the proportion of children who are on course to achieve a good level of development in 2016 is much improved.
- The strong and well established practice in the Nursery is being implemented in the Reception year as a result of the passion and clear vision of the early years leader. She has a balanced view of the strengths and relative weaknesses in the Reception and Nursery classes and has worked quickly and effectively with her team to put changes in place that are having a positive impact on learning. With the support of the effective newly appointed Reception teacher, planning and learning resources have been reorganised so that children have more opportunities to practise mathematics and literacy skills in the Reception class.
- Due to consistent, well established routines, relationships between staff and children are positive. Clear direction from staff enables pupils to respond quickly to instructions. Children sustain their concentration in both indoor and outdoor areas and behave well.
- Adults generally support children's social development well. In the activities observed, many boys chose building and climbing and many girls chose quieter activities. Leaders are aware of the importance of ensuring that boys and girls all get a fair choice of activities, and develop their skills broadly; boys and girls both enjoyed planting seeds in the allotment.
- In Reception, teachers skilfully draw on their experiences to encourage children to ask questions and begin to develop writing; the discovery of a spider prompted some boys to write about spiders. After making elephant models out of milk bottles, children in Reception wrote a story about an elephant using phonics to sound out the words they were writing.
- Children benefit from a rich variety of activities and experiences which help them understand the diversity of their community. Inspectors saw children in the Nursery sensitively making banana bread alongside children from Ifield School (a special school), and 'reading' to a blind volunteer and her guide dog. Group sessions run by an external adviser for parents and children who speak English as an additional language are having a positive impact on children's progress over time, so that these children are now making rapid progress. The school's hard work to engage parents has resulted in better attended parents meetings. Parents welcome and are full of praise for the impact of the staff on the levels of confidence, language acquisition and social skills of their children. Children's development is carefully assessed and recorded in each child's individual 'learning journal' along with evidence of what the children have been experiencing. Parents have the opportunity to look at these journals during the much appreciated monthly focus meetings. In addition, 'come and play' sessions are on offer to parents and they are well attended.

School details

Unique reference number	118585
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10012698

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	416
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Duncan Campbell
Headteacher	Catherine Taylor (Consultant Headteacher KCC)
Telephone number	01474 566979
Website	www.kings-farm.kent.sch.uk
Email address	office@kings-farm.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 October 2014

Information about this school

- King’s Farm Primary School is a member of The Cedar Federation, along with Ifield School. The federation has a single governing body.
- King’s Farm Primary School is a much larger than average-sized primary school. There are two classes in each year group from Nursery to Year 6. Since September, pupils have joined the school as mid-year admissions.
- The school serves a community with above-average levels of deprivation.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils join and leave the school during each school year. After the start of this academic year, 152 pupils joined the school and 61 pupils left. Half of the pupils who joined were pupils who spoke English as an additional language who were new arrivals to the area or to the country.
- There is a much lower than average proportion of girls.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above average.
- The school does not meet the government’s current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection began as the fifth special measures monitoring visit under section 8 of the Education Act, 2005. At the end of the first day, the visit was deemed a full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act, 2005.
- Inspectors observed 15 lessons across all year groups and most classes, 10 jointly with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the consultant headteacher, the head of school designate, the federation deputy head, middle leaders and two governors.
- The lead inspector met with two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work, listened to pupils read, observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and at lunchtime and talked informally with staff, pupils and parents.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account the 37 responses to the online Ofsted parent questionnaire, Parent View, and three letters. Responses to questionnaires completed by staff were also taken into account.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including those to do with safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of visits by the local authority, the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school's development plans.

Inspection team

Theresa Phillips , lead inspector

Dr Calvin Pike

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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