

Saxon Way Primary School

Church Path, Ingram Road, Gillingham ME7 1ST

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Inspection dates | 8–9 June 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 | Not previously inspected |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders are ambitious for every child in the school and have created a culture of high expectations. Staff, pupils and parents recognise and value this.
- Leaders and staff are relentless and have been successful in improving pupils' behaviour and creating a safe, calm and purposeful school.
- Pupils who started their education in this school are increasingly working at or beyond age-related expectations.
- Pupils hold a wide range of responsibilities in the school and their contributions are recognised and valued.
- Leaders have strengthened teaching so that pupils in key stage 2 are making more rapid progress to wipe out the legacy of poor teaching in the past.
- The attainment of Year 6 pupils last year was below the national average, but better teaching meant these pupils had made good progress in their final year. Pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 are making increased progress so that standards are set to rise when they leave the school.
- All adults show respect and warmth towards pupils and this has a positive impact on pupils' personal and social development.
- The trust provides strong challenge to leaders and has a clear view of the school's strengths and what it needs to do to be even better.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Key stage 2 pupils do not have a rich enough range of opportunities to apply and extend their writing skills in a range of subjects.
- Improvements in attendance are not consistent or sustained over time.
- Opportunities for the youngest children to improve their language skills are not always seized upon by staff.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the school's curriculum provides rich opportunities for key stage 2 pupils to practise and improve their writing in a range of subjects.
- Further improve pupils' attendance at school so that:
 - levels of persistent absence continue to reduce
 - pupils consistently attend school more regularly over time.
- Improve the quality of the early years foundation stage by ensuring that all adults provide the youngest children with enriching opportunities to develop their speaking skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The executive headteacher and head of school are highly effective. Working in unity, they have transformed the school's culture and raised expectations of staff to meet the aspirations of pupils. The atmosphere in classrooms and around the school is calm and the climate for learning is strong.
- Leaders have an accurate view of what the school does well and are clearly focused on what can be better. The head of school has the respect and trust of staff and is able to pinpoint what each teacher needs to do to improve further. The management of the staff's performance is rigorous and focused on the progress and achievement of pupils. Staff training is carefully matched to the school's priorities. Leaders also recognise the challenges of teacher recruitment for their expanding school and have worked effectively to identify and train staff who are on the journey to becoming qualified teachers.
- Middle leaders and wider teams, such as the inclusion team, are having a positive impact on the school. Since 2013, senior leaders have been able to step back from personally having to lead on every aspect of the school by recruiting and developing staff to take on wider responsibilities. Leaders have clear strategic plans for expansion, which include careful consideration of leadership capacity.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors were overwhelmingly positive about the school. Parents recognised the improvements that school leaders have made, particularly with regard to behaviour. Leaders and staff are clearly visible to parents and this is welcomed. Improving relationships with parents has been a priority for leaders. This has been effective in increasing parents' participation in school life, particularly working in partnership to improve pupils' behaviour.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong across the whole school. For example, the youngest two-year-olds show clear awe and wonder as they find and look closely at living creatures in their garden. Older pupils have the opportunity in assemblies to hear about visitors' religious beliefs. Pupils are then given opportunities to reflect back to key themes such as 'having a fresh start'. Pupils' social development is closely linked to the school's values, which are clearly understood by pupils. During the inspection, leaders were often heard praising pupils for demonstrating those values as they held doors open or said 'thank you'.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The fundamental British values of democracy and the rule of law, tolerance, free speech and mutual respect are taught well. For example, Year 6 pupils' current history work on Martin Luther King gave rise to complex class conversations about tolerance and respect. Pupils in key stage 1 have been thinking carefully about cultural customs around the world through their geography topic. Pupils are given increasing opportunities to vote on key decisions and to elect older pupils to their positions of responsibility.
- Leaders make sure the most able pupils are challenged. Regular meetings with teachers to look closely at pupils' progress include a sharp focus on the most able. The school uses partnerships with other schools well. For example, a group of able writers regularly visit a neighbouring school to receive additional teaching.
- Leaders ensure that the pupil premium is used well, to promote the care, well-being and progress of disadvantaged pupils (the pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils entitled to free school meals and for children who are looked after). In those year groups with the most significant gaps between the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and others, these are closing quickly. The breakfast and nurture provision are effective in ensuring that pupils are ready to learn, and this contributes to the significant improvements in behaviour. While attendance is not improving consistently overall, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved this year.
- Leaders make effective use of additional government funding for sports. Specialist teachers work alongside class teachers to develop their skills and confidence in teaching a wide range of sports. Pupils also access a wide range of competitive sporting events, with access to specialist coaching.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Year group topics are carefully planned across the full range of national curriculum subjects. These plans include clear links to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Educational visits are planned to enrich the curriculum. During this inspection, the key stage 2 classes who had just returned from the zoo were very keen to share what they had seen and learned about the animals. Some less-confident speakers were inspired to tell inspectors about their pets at home and the conditions they need to live in, and this was stimulated by the zoo trip.
- In the early years and key stage 1, pupils' writing across the curriculum matches the high expectations in their literacy work. This enables key skills to be applied, practised and extended. However, this is not the

case in key stage 2 at present. The clear progress and expectations in pupils' literacy work is not consistent in their writing across the wider curriculum.

- The academy trust is the body that holds leaders to account for school improvement. Leaders welcome the levels of challenge and also value the support for their leadership. The trust established a strategic board to look closely at the 2015 outcomes for pupils. The board meets regularly and challenges leaders to talk through pupil progress in depth. As a result, all leaders are very clear about what is working and what is less effective. Consequently, leaders make informed changes to provision to ensure that all groups of pupils are making good progress. The trust holds leaders firmly to account for the outcomes of pupils, and this is clear in the management of leaders' performance.
- All strategic leaders understand the different roles and responsibilities of the trust and the local governing board. The board are clear that the professional skills of the trust enable them to challenge leaders about strategic priorities and progress. The trust advisers undertake regular monitoring which is both directed by school leaders but also designed to test out the accuracy of leaders' judgements about the school. The trust provides effective support for the board, through training and induction which enables local governance to be effective.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are ambitious for the school and have an accurate view of the improvements that leaders have made to the behaviour of pupils over time.
 - Governors visit regularly to monitor the work of the school. A recent pupil progress meeting with the inclusion team began with a walk around the school so that governors could see evidence of the schools' values demonstrated by pupils.
 - New governors are supported well. Less-experienced governors join colleagues on visits to the school to gain an understanding about the board's work. All governors review regularly what skills and knowledge they bring to their roles, and this information is used to plan individual and whole-board training.
 - Governors are clear about the role of the trust and how this links to their work. For example, a trust monitoring visit challenged leaders to review the visitors' information leaflet. A subsequent safeguarding governor visit followed up this piece of work to ensure that it had been undertaken. A dedicated trust officer sits on the governing board to ensure that the communication between the trust and the board is effective.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The clear policies, rigorous procedures and regular staff training all contribute to a culture of safety. The school works closely with a wide range of other agencies and the records that the school keeps are highly detailed. Risk assessments are clear and used well. For example, when the planned building work had resulted in changes to how the school was operating at break and lunchtimes, leaders sought the views of pupils about how to ensure that the temporary loss of outside space did not have an impact on pupil's safety. Older pupils are having a positive impact on the safety of others. Year 6 first aiders were very keen to talk to inspectors about their training, their certificates and the bags they wear around their waist at lunchtime to tend to minor injuries if they occur. Parents are overwhelmingly confident that their children are safe and exceptionally well cared for.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers across the school know pupils well. In mathematics and English, teachers use accurate assessments of pupils' starting points to plan the next steps in learning. Lessons are engaging and behaviour is good because of the appropriate level of challenge for groups of pupils, including the most able.
- Teachers have developed the resilience of older pupils, including those who have special educational needs or disability. Pupils respond very well to the range of interventions that are enabling them to acquire the skills they need to catch up. For example, a group of Year 3 pupils who did not achieve well in the early years have made accelerated progress in their writing this year and are now working broadly within age-related expectations.
- Teachers are clear with pupils about what they need to do to improve their work, and pupils respond effectively to this. During the inspection, some lower-ability pupils in key stage 2 were seen rising to the challenge to improve their writing. Firstly, they had added some richer vocabulary to their work, and they then used a dictionary to find the correct spelling for the words that did not 'look' right. Pupils are ambitious to improve.

- Teachers meet the needs of the most able pupils well. Pupils who spoke to inspectors recognise and like the level of challenge. Teachers use questioning effectively to extend pupils' thinking. For example, Year 2 pupils were grouping things that were 'living' and things that were not. Pupils able to do this were quickly challenged to think about things that were once living but are now dead.
- Teachers across the school focus on developing pupils' spoken language and this benefits all pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language. The recent zoo trip for Year 3 and Year 4 pupils promoted lots of conversation between pupils and inspectors. However, it was the staff's use of the trip photographs on display which prompted those less-confident pupils to share what they had learned.
- Phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) are taught well in key stage 1. The school's systematic teaching of phonics also enables staff to support key stage 2 pupils to fill gaps in their knowledge well. Reading has been promoted effectively by leaders and staff alike. Pupils who read with inspectors have developed knowledge and skills that are broadly age-appropriate and could talk about the importance of reading at home. The school is sensitive to those pupils who do not read widely at home, and provides additional support for these pupils.
- In the early years and key stage 1, the standard of writing in topic work is the same as in literacy lessons. Work in topic books shows pupils writing at length while applying the skills they have learned. Progress in writing in key stage 2 is evident in literacy books but less so in wider topic work. This is because teachers do not have the same high expectations of writing across the wider curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- All adults who work in the school act as exemplary role models to pupils, and actively promote the school's values through their interactions with pupils and adults alike. Pupils' relationships with adults are strong, particularly for the most vulnerable pupils who work with a wide range of adults to meet their needs. Pupils are confident that they are well cared for.
- Behaviour has improved because school leaders have placed great importance on developing the personal and social skills of pupils. Staff use planned opportunities well to meet the needs of pupils. For example, one year group has been intentionally focusing on relationships for a sustained period to ensure that pupils have the skills to build friendships. Adults are clearly having a significant impact on pupils. During the inspection, key stage 1 pupils were able to talk about what it means to 'retaliate' if someone behaved badly toward them and why this was not the right course of action.
- Pupils are confident to talk about their learning. The youngest children are supported to recall both what they did and what they learned. Older pupils are given the key vocabulary, particularly in literacy and mathematics, to talk confidently and accurately about what they are learning. Pupils who spoke with inspectors were able to talk about what they need and want to do to improve their work.
- The breakfast club provides a welcome and calm start to the day for many pupils, including the most vulnerable. Adults provide warm relationships, are sensitive to how individual pupils arrive at school and give the right support so that children are ready to learn by the time the school day starts.
- Pupils have good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, including online. Pupils told inspectors that bullying was rare and that they trust adults to follow up on any behaviour that does not meet the high standards set. Detailed and accurate records show that rare and declining incidents are dealt with.
- Pupils hold a number of important roles in school, such as ambassadors, mediators and first aiders. Leaders have prioritised this and see it as one of the most important aspects of the school's work. Pupils value the work of peer mediators in helping sort out the minor disagreements they have.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and when working with adults outside of the classrooms. Staff have clear, high expectations of pupils and use the school's behaviour policy effectively. On the rare occasions where pupils are off-task, adults confidently explain what is expected and pupils respond well.
- Pupils move around the school in a calm and purposeful manner both when they are with adults but also when they are unsupervised. Pupils are very polite and courteous around the school. For example, holding doors open for staff and welcoming visitors to their classrooms warmly.
- Behaviour at lunchtime and breaktimes is good. Adults provide focused support for individuals who

require it. During the inspection, older pupils returned from the furthest corners of the playing field promptly, with the minimum of fuss as they lined up to return to class. All adults have high expectations and pupils work hard to meet them.

- The inclusion team monitor behaviour incidents closely. The tracking of patterns in pupils' behaviour over time highlights just how poor behaviour was in 2013 and how it has been transformed. The number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced significantly. The plans to support a minority of pupils' behaviour are clear and effective. The plans highlight the improvements required and are clear about what everyone must do. Families are able to access wider support through the strong relationships the school has with other agencies.
- Levels of persistent absence have declined over time and this is on track to continue. Leaders know families very well and have employed a wide range of effective strategies to work with them. However, leaders know there is still more to be done. Overall improvements in attendance have not been sustained over time. In March this year, during a trust monitoring visit, attendance levels had improved. However, these improvements were not sustained and current attendance remains at the same below-national-average level as 2015. Leaders are currently using formal proceedings with a significant number of families. Leaders at all levels are focused on the need for consistent improvement.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points across the school. The pupils currently in key stage 2 have experienced a legacy of inadequate teaching, low aspirations and poor behaviour which all impacted on their learning over time. Leaders' ambitions for all pupils, combined with good teaching, ensures that children in the early years and key stage 1 have an increasingly strong start in the school.
- Pupils achieve well in phonics. In 2015, the proportion of Year 1 children who achieved the expected standard was above the national average, with disadvantaged pupils doing better than their peers. Current pupils are on track to achieve the same. The proportion of current Year 2 pupils who will meet the standard is likely to be the same proportion as 2015, which is above the national average.
- Pupils currently in Year 2 had a strong start in the new school in 2013. School information and the work in books seen on inspection highlights that the end of key stage outcomes are on track to be better than in 2015 in all subjects, with significant improvements in reading and writing. The school currently has significantly more pupils working at higher levels in Year 2, in all subjects, compared to last year.
- Disadvantaged pupils and boys currently in Year 3 did not do as well as their peers at the end of key stage one. These gaps were the biggest in the school. Leaders and staff have a clear understanding of this cohort and have put a range of interventions and support in place, and these gaps are closing quickly.
- The most able pupils make good progress across the school in all subjects. Class teachers are ambitious for all pupils and leaders check regularly on the progress of groups. The proportion of pupils working beyond age-related expectations is increasing, particularly in the early years and key stage 1.
- Pupils, currently in Year 5, started key stage 2 with significant gaps in their skills and knowledge. School information demonstrates rapid progress from these low starting points and indicates that pupils will go on to achieve well at the end of the key stage. Gaps are closing.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils making expected progress in reading declined at the end of key stage 2. School performance information, and inspection evidence, indicates that current Year 6 pupils are making much better progress in maths and writing, and that reading will improve in 2016. However, current pupils' low starting points in comparison to previous years means their attainment overall will remain below the national average.

Early years provision

is good

- Children make good progress during the early years foundation stage. The youngest arrive at nursery with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age and with language in many cases that is well below. The majority of children start their Reception Year working at age-related expectations because of the good teaching in the nursery. In 2015, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was above the proportion seen nationally and current children are on track to do better this year.

- Disadvantaged children make good progress in the early years. The additional funding the school receives to support these children is used effectively. Leaders use what they know about children's starting points to plan extra support across the curriculum and as a result gaps are closing.
- Children have a good start in the early years. The quality of the teaching and the progress of all groups of children ensure that an increasing proportion are ready to start Year 1.
- The youngest children settle well into nursery. Staff provide a range of stimulating and appropriate learning experiences and are sensitive to children's needs as they explore and enquire. Children who are more familiar with the nursery are highly involved in what they are doing and most adults skilfully develop their language. For example, during this inspection, children were digging for bugs and looking closely with magnifiers. The excitement and interest in what they had found was recognised by staff, who then began to talk about those creatures moving 'fast' and those moving 'slow'. However, not all adults capture those moments when children's language can be supported.
- Phonics is taught well. Reception Year children are able to use what they have learned in their writing. Teachers know what knowledge children have, so are able to challenge them to think carefully to hear the sounds at the beginning, middle or end of words. Children with secure phonics knowledge are challenged well to write full, interesting sentences.
- Reception Year children are able to talk about their learning. Teachers check carefully, through discussion, what children have learned. This builds children's confidence as speakers but also gives staff a chance to know if the activities they have planned have led to good learning. During the inspection, all children were able to talk about what they had been doing and, with careful adult questioning, all were able to talk about what they had learned.
- The learning environments inside and out provide a rich, broad and balanced curriculum. The activities children direct for themselves have been planned carefully. For example, in the nursery a group of highly engaged boys were making monsters with their playdough. They added eyes and arms to their creatures using the resources provided. The activity then took on a strong creative and language focus as the boys made up stories about their monsters and the gruesome things they would do to each other.
- Children behave well and develop strong personal and social skills. Reception Year children cooperate with each other and are able to set up and play board games that involve turn-taking without any adult support. At the end of sessions, children are highly motivated to tidy up their classrooms, independently putting things back and sweeping the floors before returning to the carpet as a group in a calm and orderly manner. The very youngest children's self-help skills are supported well. For example, two-year-olds receive sensitive support to pour and fill their drinks cups at snack time.
- Leaders and staff work closely with parents, who contribute fully to their children's assessments in the early years, including those of the two-year-olds. Staff work effectively with other agencies, such as health visitors and outreach workers who visit feeder nurseries. Transition into the Reception Year for those children who do not attend the nurseries at Saxon Way is supported well through home visits and events over the summer run by the school.

School details

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 139928 |
| Local authority | Medway |
| Inspection number | 10011714 |

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

| | |
|--|--|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 2–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 269 |
| Appropriate authority | Griffin Schools Trust |
| Chair | Jennie Thomas |
| Headteacher | Janey Denton (Executive Headteacher) Angela Sandow (Head of School) |
| Telephone number | 01634 852320 |
| Website | www.saxonway-gst.org |
| Email address | office@saxon-way.medway.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | None |

Information about this school

- Saxon Way Primary School is an average size primary school which is currently expanding.
- The school converted to academy status in September 2013, sponsored by the Griffin Schools Trust. The headteacher joined the school in January 2014 and became the executive head in June 2015. The trust has four schools within the locality, one of which is also led by the executive head.
- The school has a nursery class which offers part-time places. The school also manages an additional nursery, which is on the same site and was once part of the Children’s Centre. This nursery offers places for two-year-olds who are entitled to free places.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is almost two-thirds of pupils at the school and well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability supported by the school is above the national average.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language are broadly average and increasing.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- In 2015, the school met the current floor standard, which sets out the government’s minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning throughout the school, including jointly with the executive headteacher and the head of school. Inspectors looked at pupils' work during lessons, displays and work in books showing progress over time.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, a group of staff, the inclusion team and the SENCo. A meeting was held with representatives of the Griffin Schools Trust and a telephone meeting with the chair of the governing board.
- Parents' views were considered through the four responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View, in conversations with parents at the beginning and end of the school day and through reviewing the most recent school's survey of parents' views. The views of staff were considered through the 11 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and through a meeting.
- Inspectors observed breaktimes, lunchtimes and breakfast club.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of the school's effectiveness, improvement plans, records of trust and governors' monitoring, leaders' analysis of teaching, pupil progress, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, case studies and the central record of recruitment checks on staff.

Inspection team

Mark Cole, lead inspector

Jude Askey-Brown

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2016

