

# The Gordon Children's Academy, Infant

Gordon Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 3HQ

## Inspection dates

7–8 February 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders have a clear vision and ambition for the school and wider community. Shared leadership with the junior school ensures continuity for pupils and families.
- Leaders have a very clear understanding about what is working well and what could be even better in their school.
- Leaders have high expectations of staff and are highly effective at identifying and challenging underperformance.
- Governance is effective. The regional governing body knows the school well and understands its role within the trust's governance arrangements.
- Children in the early years, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress. Staff provide a wide range of interesting learning opportunities.
- Current Year 1 and Year 2 pupils are making good progress from their starting points, including the most able pupils.
- Teaching is good. Pupils are given rich and varied opportunities to practise their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Pupils behave well in classrooms and on the playground. They enjoy their learning and are overwhelmingly positive about their school.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders and the trust ensure that every possible step is taken to keep pupils safe.
- Since September, more pupils are coming to school regularly, including disadvantaged pupils. However, the attendance levels of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities remain low.
- Leaders have accurately identified that pupils need more opportunities to solve mathematical problems. Leaders have begun to address this but it is too soon to see the impact of leaders' actions.
- In 2016, not enough pupils were working at the expected or higher standard in mathematics at the end of Year 2.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders should further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that pupils are given greater opportunities to solve mathematical problems and develop their reasoning skills.
- Leaders should raise standards by ensuring that a greater proportion of children reach the expected standard and are working at greater depth in mathematics at the end of Year 2.
- Leaders should sustain the current improvement in pupils' levels of attendance and ensure that more pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities come to school regularly.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher is ambitious for the school and has built a staff and leadership team that want to achieve the best for the pupils in their care. Middle leaders know the school well. They are having a positive impact on making the curriculum more accessible to pupils and improving their progress.
- Leaders have a clear commitment to improvement. They have thought carefully about the federation and the continuity they now provide pupils and families. Parents and staff value the impact of leaders' work. As one staff member wrote: 'The school has a buzz unlike any other I have worked in, there is a shared determination that is picked up by all the children. I love it.'
- The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have maintained the momentum of improvement and are very astute in their judgements about the quality of teaching in the school. They know the school's many strengths but are not complacent about what they still need to do to bring about further improvement.
- Leaders look closely at the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms. They have clear expectations of staff. Leaders manage the performance of staff effectively. Over time, leaders have taken swift and decisive action to tackle underperformance.
- Leaders provide good support for teachers who are new to the profession. Teachers value and benefit from the opportunities they receive to work with and learn from each other, school leaders and other staff across the trust. As a result, teachers new to the profession are meeting the school's high expectations.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils are given a wide range of extended writing opportunities within all subjects. For example, while learning about space travel, Year 1 pupils were able to write interesting questions to astronauts and practise their use of the correct punctuation. Extra-curricular activities before school support pupils' personal development and welfare effectively.
- Pupils know and understand the school's values. Leaders prioritise the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Pupils are able to talk about how they 'consider the views of others' and how they 'don't judge people'. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupil premium funding is used well. Leaders use a wide range of performance information to identify what individual pupils and groups of pupils need. For example, the attendance levels of disadvantaged pupils have increased this year as a result of leaders' actions.
- Additional funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively. Leaders work closely with parents and health professionals to identify the needs of individual pupils. Good-quality additional support, such as speech and language input, is provided to meet pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. However, the required information report for parents about the effectiveness of the school's special educational needs policy is not yet complete.

- Sports premium funding is used effectively. The proportion of pupils taking part in the wide range of sports on offer has increased over time. Consequently, over half of the pupils now take part in at least one sporting club. Activities that take place before school, such as table tennis and dodgeball, help to encourage pupils to arrive at school on time.
- The academy trust provides effective support for school leaders.

## **Governance of the school**

- The regional governing body knows the school well. Governors know what is working well and what could be even better. They do not rely solely on what leaders tell them. Governors use visits to the school to see for themselves the work that leaders are doing. Governors are able to use published performance information about the school to ask the right questions. Members of the regional governing body fully understand their role within the trust's overall leadership structure.
- The board of directors holds the executive leaders to account effectively. The board is given detailed and wide-ranging performance information and members ask searching questions. As a result, the board has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the school.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that all staff, including those who are working at the school on a short-term basis, know and understand the school's processes for recording and sharing concerns about pupils' well-being. The culture in the school is that everyone works together to keep pupils safe. Staff with responsibility for safeguarding keep clear and comprehensive records of every meeting and conversation they have. Leaders put pupils' needs first and are not afraid to challenge the other agencies they work with to secure what is best for the most vulnerable.
- The trust undertakes regular checks in the school to ensure that agreed processes and procedures are followed. Leaders value this additional scrutiny. Staff with responsibility for safeguarding are reflective about their work. Consequently, they make minor changes to systems that are already effective where they believe they can be even better. Staff are very careful to assess possible risks to pupils, both around the school site and when pupils are out on trips. Consequently, staff take the necessary precautions to ensure pupils' safety.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Planned learning takes account of pupils' different starting points because teachers make good use of the assessment information available to them. Adults who support learning are effective because they are clear about their roles.
- Teachers and other adults are quick to identify misconceptions. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to see when and why pupils may be confused. Clear

explanations help pupils get back on the right track quickly and make good progress.

- The teaching of phonics is effective. Teachers and other staff systematically use the school's agreed approach. The most able readers are given texts that offer an appropriate level of challenge.
- Pupils are given a range of opportunities to work scientifically. For example, Year 2 pupils undertook experiments as part of their 'George's Marvellous Medicine' work and had to look closely, observe change and record their findings carefully.
- Teachers have clear expectations of pupils. However, leaders are aware that pupils' learning time is not always used as effectively as it could be.
- Pupils develop mathematical fluency in their work, particularly with number. They are given a wide range of practical resources to support them in their work. However, opportunities to solve mathematical problems are less well developed. As a result, pupils are not developing their ability to explain and reason as well as they could.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Vulnerable pupils are given a high level of sensitive and effective support. Sporting clubs before school, together with the breakfast club, provide a calm start to the day. Morning routines ensure that classrooms are calm and tranquil. Adults know pupils very well and, as a result, are highly effective at supporting those pupils who are not always ready to learn when they arrive at school.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Infant pupils value the time they spend with some of the junior pupils at breaktimes and during lunchtime clubs. Pupils know what bullying is, but do not feel that it happens at their school. Pupils know that they can go to adults for help should they need it, and feel that adults are always ready to help them.
- Pupils are confident in talking about their school and their learning. Pupils are proud of the important jobs that they do in the school. They talk positively about the work they have done, for example the school policies they have contributed to. Most pupils take great pride in their work. However, some pupils do not present their work with the same level of care.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils move around the range of buildings on the school site with a sense of calm. Breaktimes are productive and positive experiences. Pupils know the school's behaviour policy because they have helped write it. They are well supported to think about their behaviour and be aware of the impact it can have on others.
- Classrooms are mostly busy and purposeful places to learn, where pupils are focused on their work and behave well. On occasions, when pupils are less focused, they respond well to clear reminders about what adults expect from them.

- Attendance levels are improving. At the end of 2015 and 2016, attendance levels were not good enough. This year, more pupils are coming to school regularly, including those who are disadvantaged. Leaders recognise that this improvement needs to be sustained. The attendance levels of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not as good as they should be.

### Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- The proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is consistently above that found nationally. This represents good, and sometimes very good, progress from their starting points. Disadvantaged pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.
- Current Year 1 pupils are making good progress in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics. The most able pupils, who leave the early years working at the expected standard, make good progress, including those who are disadvantaged.
- Current Year 2 pupils are making good progress in mathematics and writing. Leaders have taken effective action to increase the progress that pupils are now making in reading, compared to the beginning of the year.
- In 2016, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the end of Year 2 working at the expected standard in science was in line with other pupils nationally. Current pupils are making good progress in science.
- In 2016, not enough pupils reached the expected standards at the end of Year 2. Inconsistent teaching had an impact on pupils' progress.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- The early years curriculum is broad, balanced and stimulating. Children are provided with a rich range of learning experiences both inside and outside. Staff provide children with resources and learning opportunities that enable children to practise the things that adults have shown them or told them about. As a result, children develop new knowledge and skills quickly.
- Children develop good phonics knowledge because planned learning takes account of children's starting points. Children who are new to phonics quickly develop their understanding of the sounds that letters make. Children with good phonics knowledge apply this in their writing tasks and can break words into a series of sounds and put them back together again. Adults sensitively help children form letter shapes correctly by modelling it when children forget where to start and end the letter shapes.
- Adults have high expectations of children. As a result, children develop good personal and social skills. Routines are well established. Children respond very well to what adults tell them. For example, children have learned quickly how to move around the class safely while holding scissors. Classrooms in the early years are busy and highly purposeful places to learn. Some children find receiving too much verbal information from adults challenging and, as a result, become distracted.

- Assessment information is accurate, including judgements about children's knowledge and skills on entry to school. Most children start school with levels of language and communication skills that are below those typical for their age. Outcomes for children are good. All children make good progress from their starting points, including the most able children and those who are disadvantaged. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year is consistently above that found nationally. Consequently, children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Partnerships are good. Leaders have established good working relationships with nurseries in the locality. Leaders want to make sure that their judgements about children's achievements are the same as other local providers.
- Staff work well with parents, who, in turn, are overwhelmingly positive about the start their children get. One parent told an inspector that she had a 'new daughter' since her child had started school. Parents value the opportunities to come into classrooms on Fridays and look at their children's books.
- Leaders know what is working well for children in the early years and are ambitious about further improvements they want to make. However, leaders are not yet clear enough about what the success of those improvements will look like.

## School details

Unique reference number	140607
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10026738

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	5 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	166
Appropriate authority	The academy trust
Chair	Lee Round (regional governing body)
Headteacher	Jennifer McGuigan
Telephone number	01634 719 971
Website	<a href="http://www.gordonfed.medway.sch.uk/">www.gordonfed.medway.sch.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@gordonfed.medway.sch.uk">office@gordonfed.medway.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The infant school is federated with the junior school. The schools share the same site, senior leadership team, governance arrangements and policies and procedures.
- Both schools opened on 1 March 2014 as academies sponsored by The Thinking Schools Academy Trust.
- At the time of the inspection, the school was led by the deputy headteacher who was acting headteacher while the substantive headteacher was on maternity leave. However, the substantive headteacher was present during the inspection as part of the trust's 'keeping in touch' days.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is greater than found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below that found nationally.



- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about their policy for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

## Information about this inspection

- The federated junior school was inspected at the same time.
- Inspectors observed learning throughout the school, often with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at pupils' work during lessons and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and middle leaders, members of the regional governing body and the executive leadership of the trust. Documents relating to governance were reviewed.
- Parents' views were considered through the 28 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and in conversations with parents at the beginning and end of the school day. The views of staff were considered through the 22 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and through meetings.
- Pupils' views were heard through meetings and by talking to pupils around the school.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of the school's effectiveness, improvement plans and leaders' analyses of the quality of teaching. Inspectors also evaluated pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records and the central record of recruitment checks on staff.

## Inspection team

Mark Cole, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Dan Lambert

Her Majesty's Inspector

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