

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



18 April 2017

Mrs Eileen Mumford
Headteacher
Kemsing Primary School
West End
Kemsing
Sevenoaks
Kent
TN15 6PU

Dear Mrs Mumford

Short inspection of Kemsing Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 March 2017, 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You have led the school with resolve and have enthused and encouraged staff to be ambitious for pupils. You are assisted well by senior leaders and by a positive staff team who are single minded in their drive to provide a high standard of education for pupils. The effectiveness of leadership has been strengthened because responsibilities for steering subjects have been delegated to middle leaders. Middle leaders support you unreservedly and are complimentary of the training and opportunities they have received to help them increase their skills and expertise. Consequently, middle leaders take ownership of areas they are responsible for and feel emboldened to effect change. They have aided you in raising the quality of teaching because they are involved effectively in monitoring and evaluating the performance of colleagues. They are excellent role models to others. As a result, the quality of teaching is consistently good, and this in turn is impacting positively on the progress that pupils are making. Thus, the leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Most parents are highly supportive of the school and in particular of your leadership. Parents wrote such tributes as: 'The ethos of the school comes from Mrs Mumford's wonderful nature: calm, measured and happy'. Another example was: 'I believe a significant reason for the high quality of the school is down to the excellent leadership of the headteacher', and also, 'Her style of leadership is gentle and quiet, an encourager of the good and a great respecter of each child in the school.' Despite these very positive comments, which reflect the views of many

parents, you know that there is still more work to do to ensure that parents are aware of, and see, the positive aspects of their children's experiences at school. This will help to ensure that parents are wholly engaged with the school's continued upward journey, and participate fully in their children's education.

You know the strengths of the school and what needs to be accomplished to make the school even better. For instance, leaders understand that even more pupils need to make greater than expected progress to raise the proportion of pupils who achieve higher standards by the time they leave the school. Leaders should continue to stretch the most able pupils and challenge middle-attaining pupils to think more deeply and apply their knowledge in a range of ways, so that they too can reach the highest levels of attainment.

You and your staff have worked creditably to meet the recommendations from the previous inspection. You have ensured that pupils are clear about what they are learning and use targets and helpful guidance from adults to improve their own work. Classrooms are adorned with useful prompts to help pupils engage with their learning without relying on support from adults. You have provided additional training for teaching assistants to help them ask probing questions and deepen pupils' thinking in lessons. Effective questioning is now a strength, particularly in key stages 1 and 2. You have considered carefully how to raise attainment in mathematics. For instance, you have employed a subject specialist to teach the older pupils in the school, so that pupils' mastery of mathematics is developed fully.

Governors add to the capacity of leaders to improve the school further. Governors are evaluative, thoughtful and skilled. They share your ambitions for pupils. They ask searching questions about how the work of the school could be improved. They provide challenge and support because they clearly understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is because leaders are transparent with the information they give to governors. Governors take their responsibility to safeguard pupils very seriously and discharge their statutory duties well.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. This is reinforced by a deeply rooted, caring and nurturing environment which focuses on the well-being and safety of pupils. Leaders are acutely aware of their responsibilities to protect pupils and ensure that their practice is in line with current legislation and consistently applied by staff. Leaders make certain that adults are well trained, including in relation to radicalisation and online safety. Pupils who are at risk are supported very well, and leaders diligently pursue positive outcomes for the most vulnerable pupils in their care. This includes instances when pupils take too much time off school, which stops them from making the progress of which they are capable.

Most parents agree that their children are safe and cared for well. One parent expressed their view by saying of her children: 'Both have flourished under the school's leadership and the supportive and nurturing environment it creates'.

Another said that, 'the staff at Kemsing provide a safe learning environment where pupils are encouraged to find their own voices and are stronger for it.' A small number of parents express concern about pupils' behaviour at the school and about how well leaders deal with bullying. However, during this inspection pupils were considerate towards each other, polite and engaged in their learning. No inappropriate behaviour was observed.

Pupils feel safe at the school. They know how to keep themselves safe and have a clear understanding of how to use the internet safely. Pupils I spoke to felt strongly that there is an adult in the school that they can talk to if something is worrying them. Pupils are adamant that bullying is exceptionally rare and that if it did occur adults would quickly sort it out. Pupils also spoke positively about the behaviour of their classmates in lessons and at breaktimes. Pupils expressed pride in their school, using adjectives such as, 'extraordinary', 'educational', 'wonderful' and 'forgiving' to describe their experiences.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I focused on how effectively leaders, including governors, have continued to improve the school's effectiveness and address the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection. I examined the progress that pupils have made from their various starting points, including children in the early years. I was particularly interested in the progress currently being made in writing and mathematics. I explored how well boys are achieving in comparison to girls. I considered whether teachers and leaders have high enough expectations of disadvantaged pupils, boys and middle-attaining pupils to enable them to reach the highest standards. In addition, I evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding and how well the school supports families of pupils who have too many days off school.
- Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are working towards mastery in mathematics. There are many opportunities for pupils to apply what they have learned and select mathematical problems that challenge them. Pupils reason and investigate the most efficient strategies to tackle complex calculations. For example, Year 5 pupils attempted to work out the missing numbers needed in a multiplication to reach a total of 589, using only prime numbers. Year 6 pupils worked out how many bags of peas were needed to cover the floor of the school hall. A mere 2,675! Pupils demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and use mathematical language precisely. Occasionally, learning is not pitched at quite the right level and activities are too repetitive to ensure that pupils make as much progress as they could, particularly for the most able and middle-attaining pupils. However, the vast majority of pupils are making at least expected progress in mathematics and many are making greater progress than in previous years.
- Work in books shows that pupils have secure grammatical knowledge and are highly competent spellers because of effective teaching across the school. Nearly all pupils are making at least expected progress and over a quarter of pupils are making even greater progress. Pupils' skills in writing are improving quickly. Still more needs to be done to ensure that pupils' attainment in writing is as high as in reading.

- In the past, boys have made good progress from their various starting points. They continue to do so. However, you have rightly identified that even more needs to be done to raise boys' achievement so that they achieve as well as girls, particularly in writing. You have made an encouraging start to this endeavour. School improvement plans are focused on improving boys' outcomes and as a result, the proportion of boys making accelerated progress to reach the expected and higher standards is better than in the past. In the early years, staff have provided 'invisible pens' to excite boys to engage in the early stages of mark making, although few children are gripped by this initiative at the moment.
- There has been a whole-school impetus to instil a love of reading in pupils so that their vocabulary improves and pupils can 'magpie' and 'mimic' authors' styles in their own writing. Pupils' writing books, including those of boys, show that this is paying dividends and the progress that pupils are now making is rapid. Teachers skilfully engage boys by asking them probing questions and providing them with many opportunities to share the strategies they have used to tackle their work. I found that boys were entrenched in their learning and keen to achieve well.
- Leaders are clearly focused on raising the attainment of pupils so that even more reach the highest standards in their work. Consequently, learning is mostly well-matched to the needs of pupils, including in the early years and for the most able pupils. Work in books and observations in lessons show the good progress that pupils are making in reading, writing and mathematics, and in a wide range of subjects. For instance, the most able pupils write at length and use a range of complex sentences, enhanced by rich vocabulary and precise punctuation, to grip the reader's attention. For example, a Year 6 pupil wrote: 'Dear Diary, today has been a complete curveball.'
- Occasionally, the most able and middle-attaining pupils spend too long repeating work that they can already do, especially in mathematics, rather than forging learning forward and applying what they know in a range of ways to deepen their understanding. Nonetheless, most pupils feel that teachers encourage them to do their best in lessons and many pupils feel that work challenges them.
- The proportion of pupils in the school who are disadvantaged is very low compared to the national average. It is therefore difficult to compare the achievement of this group of pupils from one year to the next. Pupil premium funding is carefully allocated and evaluated to measure the difference it is making to the outcomes of this vulnerable group. Leaders target pupils' individual needs. This bespoke approach ensures that pupils make good progress from their starting points. Additional support impacts positively on their outcomes so that their achievement reflects, or is diminishing differences rapidly upon, the national average for reading, writing and mathematics. This year, more disadvantaged pupils are working at the highest levels of attainment than in the past, including in the early years. Leaders know that this good start needs to continue in order to raise the attainment of middle-attaining disadvantaged pupils.
- You work hard to make certain that pupils attend school every day. This includes offering incentives for pupils, such as a weekly attendance cup for the class with the best attendance and 100% attendance certificates. Last year, the number of

pupils who missed too much school was far higher than in the past. You have addressed this issue swiftly and ensured that parents are clear about the negative impact of poor attendance on their child's progress. You work alongside other agencies, such as the attendance officer and local police, to ensure that pupils attend as often as they should. Consequently, attendance is in line with the national average once more. A parent exclaimed: 'My son has made incredible progress since he started Reception and enjoys coming to school every day.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- increase the proportion of pupils who make more than expected progress, especially middle-attaining pupils, so that even more of them exceed age-related expectations
- continue to focus on boys' achievement so that the difference between their achievement and that of girls diminishes rapidly
- use pupils' growing love of reading to further enhance their vocabulary and ability to write for an audience, so that pupils' achievement in writing is as good as in reading
- make certain that the strengths of the school are communicated effectively to parents, and further opportunities are provided for them to participate in their children's educational journey.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Abigail Birch
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the early years leader and the school's business manager. In addition, I spoke with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I also spoke with the school improvement adviser on the telephone. We visited all classes together on at least one occasion. I spoke to pupils in lessons and met with a group of pupils more formally to gather their views about the school. There were no pupil responses to the online survey. I looked at pupils' English, mathematics and topic books with the English, mathematics and early years leaders, and viewed pupils' work during lessons. I took account of the 55 responses

to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 33 accompanying free-text responses. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day. I also took account of the 11 responses made by staff to the online staff questionnaire. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about school improvement, pupils' achievement, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. I also looked at, and discussed with you, the evaluation of the school's effectiveness.