

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Caroline Mariner
Principal
Iwade School
School Lane
Iwade
Sittingbourne
Kent
ME9 8RS

Dear Caroline Mariner

Short inspection of Iwade School

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school is now part of a multi-academy trust with one other local school. You and your executive headteacher have taken full advantage of the development opportunities that this has provided. You both have a shared vision for excellence, 'Together everyone achieves more'. You have built a united team across the Timu Academy Trust, which works enthusiastically and always in the best interest of the pupils in their care. At the start of the day, I met a number of parents. Several parents openly declared how proud they are that their children attend your school. A parent summarised the views of many by stating that Iwade has 'given my children an amazing start to their education; they will be better members of society in the future because of it'.

The school has continued to grow to become a three-form-entry school. The challenges that such an expansion pose have been tackled proactively by all members of the school community. Your highly motivated team feels well supported because you have involved team members fully in key developments and given them the right training to enable them to achieve well. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good. Some is outstanding.

You know the strengths of your school extremely well. You quickly identify areas of

the school's work that could be better, and have put plans in place to address them. As a result, you have secured improvement since the last inspection. You and your staff have worked conscientiously to meet the recommendations within the previous report.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors recognised the many strengths of the school, including the excellent leadership provided by the executive headteacher. They also identified a need to improve achievement in writing and to ensure that all lower-attaining pupils read every day and are well supported by teaching assistants. Leaders have addressed these points effectively so that standards in writing have improved, and lower-attaining pupils are being well supported, which has resulted in this group of pupils making better progress in reading.

Notwithstanding this success, you are aiming higher. Your self-evaluation is accurate, you know what needs to be improved and you understand the current priorities for the school. You are ambitious for further improvement and know that more needs to be done for the school to become outstanding. For instance, leaders from all key stages understand that more pupils need to make greater than expected progress. Leaders do not always stretch the most able or challenge all pupils enough to think more deeply and apply their knowledge in a range of ways, so that they can reach the highest levels of attainment across all subjects.

You have recently implemented a new assessment and tracking system that allows you to see how well pupils are progressing. You and your team then carry out careful analysis of this information. You use this well to inform decisions about support and intervention to ensure that all pupils, including the most able, make at least expected progress. Planned, thorough checks by the leadership team ensure that assessments are accurate. You have analysed what the school needs to do to make pupils' outcomes even better, and have made a speedy response to ensure that the progress that pupils make in all year groups will become consistently strong.

Parents are complimentary about how well their children are helped to settle in to the Reception class and the progress they make. One parent wrote, 'It is amazing how quickly my son is picking up new words to both read and spell.' Children get along with each other well, demonstrating strong personal, social and emotional development. Children enter the school with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age and make good progress from their starting points. A greater proportion of children than found nationally achieve a good level of development, showing they are ready for Year 1.

You have developed a curriculum that is broad and balanced and which makes good use of the school's setting. There are many engaging activities and topics across a range of subject areas. Pupils learn many interesting facts and become increasingly knowledgeable about the topics studied. The leadership team has rightly prioritised the development of historical, geographical, physical, artistic and scientific skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

Everyone at Iwade makes safety a priority. Pupils justifiably say they feel safe at school. Pupils say that bullying is rare, but that if it does occur, 'the teachers help us to sort it out'. Pupils usually play very happily together at playtimes. They are confident that if they cannot sort out any disagreement, an adult is always around to help.

Pupils' safety is high profile and it is regularly discussed at staff meetings and governor meetings, and is an integral aspect of an effective induction programme. Adults know what action to take if they have concerns about a pupil's welfare, and you promptly involve the right agencies when appropriate. Staff training is frequently updated, including keeping pupils safe from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

Governors take their responsibility to protect pupils very seriously and evaluate the strength of safeguarding throughout the school. The processes to recruit staff are secure and the single central record is well maintained.

Attendance is above the national average. This is because school leaders have worked purposefully to ensure that pupils are punctual and attend school every day. You are making sure that parents are acutely aware of the many ways in which pupils are supported to stay safe.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I focused, in particular, on the following aspects of the school: the effectiveness of the school's work to keep pupils safe; how well pupils achieve and make progress in reading; how leaders are ensuring that outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are improving; how leaders across the multi-academy trust ensure the highest quality of teaching and learning in the school; and the effectiveness of the school's curriculum.
- You and the leaders within the Timu Academy Trust have worked hard to raise the standard of teaching throughout the school. As a result, the quality of teaching is consistently good, and some is outstanding. Learning is tailored well to the specific needs of pupils, and because of this, pupils are challenged, including those who are the most able. Staff consistently demonstrate high expectations and a determination to systematically build pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- In the literacy lessons we visited, pupils were encouraged to respond to probing questions, which helped develop their knowledge. Teachers ensure that pupils know how to approach activities that are tailored for their differing needs. Inaccurate responses are not dismissed but used in a positive way to help maintain concentration and confidence. Although teachers plan precisely for what pupils are expected to learn, the way this is done tends to restrict the opportunity for pupils to work independently.
- Pupils have praiseworthy attitudes to learning. There is really good engagement

and participation, which contributes positively to the progress that pupils make. Most pupils flourish because they are now being encouraged to develop resilience and perseverance in their learning. Leaders continue to aspire for all pupils to be actively involved in their own learning and develop positive ambitions for their futures.

- Pupils told me they enjoyed the recent informative trip to a local castle and are looking forward with excited anticipation to the residential trip to Liddington. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong, supporting the clear team ethos of the school. Pupils are certainly well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The leadership of the early years is strong. The early years leader knows the strengths and weaknesses of the provision in impressive detail. He is quick to address areas for development and puts in place effective plans that have made a real difference. For example, although boys have made good progress in their writing, too few have reached a good level of development in the past. This year, the proportion of boys who have reached the expected ability in writing for their age is above the national average.
- From broadly average starting points, children make good progress during Reception Year. This is because children have access to a range of highly stimulating activities that facilitate development in all areas of their learning. Children communicate with confidence and are excited to share their learning. For example, during this inspection children talked about interviewing pirates, and one child asked, 'Where do they get their food from? Or do they just drink rum?'
- You have given renewed focus to the teaching of reading. Pupils are taught the early stages of reading highly effectively. Thus, nearly all pupils reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check by the end of Year 1. Leaders continue to support the very few pupils who find phonics tricky, and, where possible, ensure that they reach the expected standard by the following year. Pupils across key stage 2 are now better able to use their phonics to read unfamiliar words and to help them with their spelling.
- Work in pupils' books shows the wide range of vocabulary and punctuation used by pupils in their writing. Pupils have secure grammatical knowledge because it is taught well across the school. Lead teachers described the use of drama and discussion as a stimulus for writing. This provides momentum in pupils' learning. The most-able pupils demonstrate that they write with an audience in mind. For example, an older pupil created suspense in her story when she wrote, 'She seemed worried about the situation and had taken a few pictures to share with the police...'
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average for primary schools and has been for many years. Nearly all pupils say that they enjoy coming to school. The number of pupils who have too many days off school has reduced. Leaders work hard to support families when attendance is not as good as it should be. Leaders work closely with the education welfare officer who helps them to seek suitable solutions.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported.

The special educational needs coordinator works closely with the lead teachers, who know each child well. The coordinator makes sure that staff are trained effectively to increase their expertise in supporting this vulnerable group of pupils. The support makes a positive difference to their well-being, ability to access learning and the progress that they make. All additional support is checked regularly and kept under review. Many parents are complimentary overall about the support and guidance that their children receive. A few parents asked for more frequent information and more regular meetings to discuss their child's progress.

- The additional government funding, known as the pupil premium, is allocated effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress overall. The school's effective work in this area is underpinned by the accurate knowledge that staff have of each pupil's needs. The most-able disadvantaged pupils receive work that challenges them in English and mathematics, and consequently they achieve as well as their most-able classmates. This year, pupils' progress has been further improved towards the end of key stage 2 because teachers have helped their pupils understand the essential features required to achieve greater depth in writing by the time they leave the school.
- Trustees and governors add to the capacity of leaders to improve the school further. Governors are outward-looking, 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 welcome and acknowledge the importance of being held to account.
- You have successfully utilised your partnerships within the Timu Academy Trust and with other schools to seek ways to improve the school and validate your own self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness. One of the governors described the trust as, 'One school across two buildings; supporting and improving one another.' Through these partnerships, you have also made certain that the school's judgements about how well pupils are achieving are correct.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum is further developed to enable pupils to think more deeply and extend their knowledge and skills in subjects other than English and mathematics, so that they reach the outcomes of which they are capable
- all staff promote pupils' positive attitudes towards themselves and their learning, so that they are encouraged to take greater ownership of their own progress and attainment.

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

Yours sincerely

Jo Lakey
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your executive headteacher, other leaders, two members of the governing body, including a parent governor, and the chair of the board of trustees. I met with those responsible for safeguarding. We visited classes together to see pupils learning, paying particular attention to the quality of teaching in English. I spoke to pupils in lessons and met with pupils of all ages formally to gather their views about the school. I looked at pupils' writing, their mathematics and topic books, and viewed pupils' work during lessons. I listened to low-attaining pupils from Years 4 and 5 read, and looked at their work with them. I took account of the 70 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and written contributions by parents, which were also made online. I met a number of parents at the start of the school day. I reviewed the 53 responses made by staff to the online staff questionnaire. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about school improvement and pupils' achievement, and I examined safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. I also looked at, and discussed with you, the evaluation of the school's effectiveness.