

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



2 October 2017

Mr George Athanasiou
Headteacher
Great Sampford Community Primary School
Finchingfield Road
Great Sampford
Saffron Walden
Essex
CB10 2RL

Dear Mr George Athanasiou

Short inspection of Great Sampford Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 September 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

As a new headteacher, you have quickly sustained high-quality leadership, which is further supported by the strong leadership of your deputy headteacher and governing body. This is based on your high expectations for pupils and all those working in the school to teach and support them well. The change in leadership has been well planned and supported by the governing body, the impact is positive and pupils remain confident learners amid the changes. Pupils and their families are central to the school's vision and ethos and, as one parent said, your 'commitment to the existing ethos of the school is reassuring, while your motivation and enthusiasm are an exciting prospect for the future of the school'. You expect a high level of commitment to your pupils from everyone. Leaders carefully reflect and draw on research before making decisions, and this is used well in future planning. Governors share your ambition for the school and its pupils. They are able to offer effective challenge and support to you and have ensured that the governing body is made up of people with a wide range of skills and expertise.

Children start in the early year's foundation stage with a typical range of skills and quickly settle into school. Parents feel that their children 'settle well and are happy to go to school'. As a result of the varied and stimulating learning environment, by the end of their time in the early years, children are well prepared for the next

stage of their education. You make sure that a wide variety of learning opportunities and experiences are offered. Parents appreciate that the focus is not only on academic learning, but also teaching children to be 'polite, well behaved and respectful'. Parents of young children are confident about coming into school as a result of the school's open-door policy.

As well as creating a nurturing environment where all pupils are happy and attend well, you have high expectations of what pupils can achieve throughout the school. There is comprehensive monitoring of the progress pupils make in their learning and leaders always consider how they can improve the school's knowledge of its pupils. The use of self-evaluation is accurate and this has been used well to set challenging school improvement priorities for the coming year. With two of your four teachers being new to the school, you have swiftly gained a good understanding of strengths and areas for development in teaching and are putting appropriate actions in place. There is a positive ethos of hard work, striving to achieve and being a good member of the school and community, which is valued by pupils, parents and staff. Staff also have high expectations and skills, lessons are typically well planned and there are clear expectations of outcomes in each lesson. Pupils' positive learning outcomes are well supported by a culture of sharing of resources and expertise. Moderation of outcome judgements across school staff, year groups and with networks of other local schools is helpful in ensuring their accuracy.

Pupils are very proud of their school and they want to learn well. They model positive behaviours for learning and know that there is a time for learning and a time for playing. Pupils are confident with and trustful of adults. They behave well in school. The learning environment inside and outside is bright and stimulating, and encourages pupils to take pride in their learning. Interesting displays and resources are well planned and support pupils' learning. The breakfast club is available to all pupils and provides thought-provoking activities.

Where pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, you make sure that staff know how to support them well as individuals. For example, the parent of a pupil who has special educational needs feels that 'the school has been both supportive and positive' around her child's specific needs and does 'its utmost to help him try to keep his confidence'. You provide a range of effective individual and small-group activities which help pupils to catch up with their peers.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils and parents agree that Great Sampford Community Primary School is a safe place in which to learn. You, your staff and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and that your safeguarding procedures are well understood by pupils, parents and staff.

Pupils say that they feel safe and are confident about speaking with an adult in school if they have any worries. They value the close community feeling in their school, where everyone knows and takes care of each other across all ages. Pupils

have an age-appropriate understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet in school and at home. They are confident in knowing what to do if someone unknown tries to make contact with them online.

Pupils know what bullying is and say that it is very rare. If it occurs, they think that staff end it quickly and effectively. Pupils say that they value being encouraged to work and play across age groups, such as the Year 6 pupils being 'buddies' with new children in the early year's foundation stage. Parents also appreciate that 'every effort is made to encourage interaction between the different age groups, which builds lasting relationships and aids the well-being of the children.'

Staff are trained in relevant aspects of safeguarding, including the government's 'Prevent' duty. They know what action to take if they have concerns about the well-being of a child and all staff actively contribute to safeguarding. All of the adults who discussed safeguarding during the inspection expressed confidence that pupils are safe in school.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on adults working at the school. Records, including those of the actions leaders take when a child is vulnerable or in need of additional support, are securely held and well maintained.

Inspection findings

- To ascertain that the school remains good, I checked the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and how well assessment is used to plan progression in learning. Leaders have made sure that there is a comprehensive system to track the development of pupils' learning and this is used well to plan lessons which teach individuals and groups of pupils their next steps in learning.
- You use a wide range of evidence to support your judgements, including samples of work, scrutiny of workbooks and a variety of moderation activities. You check well that staff decisions about pupils' learning are sound by sharing, discussing and agreeing written work and assessment results with other schools. Where there are slight gaps in learning, you have put effective plans in place.
- Most pupils use peer assessment and support well to develop each other's understanding. Governors have a sound understanding of the assessment system and are quick to challenge any short-term dips in outcomes. Work scrutiny and lesson observation show that writing is taught across the curriculum, but there is less emphasis on pupils learning subject-specific skills across the wider curriculum.
- I explored how well teaching in key stage 1 builds on successful outcomes in the early year's foundation stage. You have quickly recognised that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics at the end of Years 1 and 2 is lower than previously and have rightly made the improvement of the teaching of phonics a school priority. You have set up a staff development plan to review the consistency of the teaching of phonics across the school and to provide staff training and new resources. Support staff are used well to provide individual or

small-group teaching for those pupils who have gaps in their knowledge of phonics.

- Leaders have identified that some pupils' writing has not developed quickly enough in key stage 1. You have successfully increased opportunities for acquiring writing skills across the wider curriculum and pupils see themselves as competent writers. You need to use the development of the teaching of phonics to further improve writing.
- I considered how well your most able pupils were being challenged to learn at a higher level in key stage 2. You use your school monitoring systems well to identify pupils who may be able to reach higher levels in particular areas of learning. Leaders effectively train and mentor staff on how to plan lessons which challenge all pupils by using activities at different degrees of difficulty. Your system of feedback to pupils about their work encourages them to choose activities with a high level of challenge and to be independent in their learning choices. Most pupils have responded well to this and enjoy having high expectations of themselves.
- Not all teachers consistently challenge the most able across all areas of writing and mathematics, although staff are held to account for the progress in learning of the most able pupils. You have quickly set up class action plans to address any low levels of challenge. Questioning is used effectively to develop pupils' understanding. I have concluded that, overall, the most able pupils are currently being challenged well, but there are a few occasions when teachers need to further refine the level of challenge in specific subject areas.
- While outcomes in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 have historically been a strength of the school, in 2017 this dipped. Leaders quickly reviewed why this happened and identified that their focus on developing pupils' calculation and problem-solving skills had been successful, but that there had been less emphasis on securing understanding of shape, space and measurement, and data handling.
- Teachers acted promptly in the new academic year to improve both curriculum content and the level of challenge in mathematics. This was observed during the inspection in lessons and by looking at pupils' work through the comparison of current work with work from the previous school year. Pupils have responded well to the mathematics activities and are highly motivated to succeed. For example, a Year 6 group was delighted to show how they had repeatedly chosen the highest level of challenge for their mathematics activities and how well they had succeeded in their learning. It is important that teachers continue to develop and refine the level of mathematical challenge for the most able pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the development of the teaching of phonics builds on the strong foundations of learning in the early years foundation stage

- the level of challenge for the most able pupils is well targeted and planned in all classes and subjects
- teaching of subject-specific skills in the wider curriculum is as well planned as it is in English, mathematics and science.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Bartlett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your deputy headteacher, your office manager, the chair and two other members of your governing body and two school improvement partners. I met a group of nine pupils chosen by you and I also spoke with pupils informally in classrooms and when walking around the school. Together with you, we visited each class to observe pupils as they were learning and to undertake a scrutiny of pupils' work in their books and folders.

I examined the policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils and the school's record of recruitment checks carried out on staff working at the school. I also analysed or discussed key documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, information about pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance, records of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and minutes of the governing body.

I considered the views of four members of staff in a meeting and I also took account of the views of the 28 parents who made contact via the Parent View free-text facility. In addition, I took account of the comments of nine parents who spoke with me during the course of the inspection.