

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



22 January 2018

Mrs Karen Becker
Principal
Pyrgo Priory Primary School
Settle Road
Harold Hill
Romford
Essex
RM3 9RT

Dear Mrs Becker

Short inspection of Pyrgo Priory Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2018, 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have set high expectations for what pupils can achieve. These expectations are based on mutual respect. The school motto exemplifies this: 'Everything we are goes into everything we do.' One of the strengths of the school is the pupils' attitudes to learning. They work hard to support each other. They are also polite and resilient and take a pride in their school.

You provide clear direction for the school's future improvement, based on the school's core values. These emphasise the importance of every child in the school. Parents spoken to are very supportive of the school. They recognise that your teachers are 'dedicated'. Comments such as 'Teaching staff greet all children with a cheery smile [which] sets a positive tone,' and 'Each teacher is enthusiastic, supportive and skilled' are typical of many parents' views. The core values seek to ensure that your pupils have ambition, enjoy school and are successful learners. You focus on academic success, but the quality of the artwork around the school demonstrates that this is a strength too. The culture of the school is demonstrated in the way that most teachers run an after-school club. This enables many of your pupils to participate in a wide range of activities. The school has been very successful in the sporting competitions in which it has participated.

You appreciate that you serve a community and have created a learning environment that promotes 'family values'. This is enhanced by the close collaboration with other schools in the trust and local authority. Your curriculum meets the needs of all your

pupils because you are constantly reviewing its effectiveness.

You have established an effective new senior leadership team. You have created a leadership team that is determined to do the best for all the pupils in the school. Together, you have led the improvements, in increasing the proportion of good and outstanding teaching and raising achievement in the early years, that were identified in the last report. You have ensured that progress is good in all subjects, especially at the end of Year 6. Children in the early years make good progress given their starting points and capabilities. Leaders rightly identified that outcomes at the higher standards in all subjects are less successful in both key stages. You put in place high-quality support for pupils in the classroom and in additional sessions. This includes enrichment activities, for example the 'Count on us' challenge and the advanced reading club. Such strategies have been successful in improving progress for most-able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils. The quality of teaching and learning continues to be a focus for the leadership team in its drive to ensure that classroom practice is consistently of a high quality. You recognise that there is still work to do to ensure that a greater proportion of pupils reach the higher standards in all subjects by the end of Years 2 and 6. You agree that attendance is low and too many pupils are persistently absent.

Governors have a good understanding of the school. They have been directly involved in recent improvements, for example, in supporting priorities through additional funding. They use a range of information effectively to challenge school leaders. They ensure that their regular visits to school enable them to see first hand the work of school leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are effective and records are complete. All checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are in place. Staff and governor training is up to date, and this has covered how to spot when pupils may be at risk of radicalisation or female genital mutilation. Staff and governors understand the current guidance and have a very clear understanding of different types of abuse. They take this responsibility seriously and are effective at all levels. Staff know how to raise any concerns they have about a pupil's welfare using the school's comprehensive system. Leaders work well with families and external agencies to ensure that pupils receive well-targeted support, as required. Your staff have very good knowledge of potential concerns in the community that the school serves. You have established a culture of vigilance in spotting and reporting concerns about pupils' well-being.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when using online technology. E-safety lessons help pupils to understand how to manage risk online. Parents and pupils agree that the school is a safe place to learn.

Inspection findings

- I looked at the progress of your most-able pupils. This was because in 2016 and 2017, attainment at the higher standard in both key stages was lower than the national averages. Although most-able pupils improved in reading at the end of Year 6, there was a decline at the higher standards in writing and mathematics. The school has recognised this, and ensuring that pupils in higher attainment groups make good progress is a priority for leaders.
- Visits to classrooms, looking at books, listening to readers, talking with pupils and reviewing current assessment information provided me with compelling evidence that pupils' progress is good. Most-able children are identified at the beginning of the early years foundation stage and are challenged across the school in their learning to reach the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children in the Reception Year are provided with a range of opportunities to succeed. Frequent assessments enable teachers to support and challenge all children. For example, evidence from a child's 'learning book' shows a most-able child challenged to explain her understanding of a story. In Year 2, most-able pupils support and challenge each other to solve problems that are set for them. In Year 5, most-able pupils are challenged by the tasks set including the use of 'mastery' questions in mathematics, for example finding the factors of numbers. The use of 'convince me' cards has proved to be an effective strategy to enable pupils to explain their mathematical reasoning. Pupils are provided with a statement and have to prove it. This extends their understanding. In Year 6, most-able pupils spoken to are confident in explaining mathematical concepts and solving problems.
- Additional strategies to challenge pupils outside the classroom are effective. For example, a most-able pupil heard reading is a member of the advanced reading club. An excellent reader, he was able to reflect on the moral message of a book recently discussed at these weekly meetings, 'The boy in the striped pyjamas'.
- For the second line of enquiry, I looked at how leaders' actions have helped improve attendance and reduce the proportion of persistent absentees. This was because attendance has been below the national averages from 2014 to 2017. The proportion of persistent absentees has been above the national averages over the same timescale.
- Leaders acknowledge this. They have identified attendance as a priority in the school improvement plan. Leaders have high expectations and have ensured that strategies are in place for attendance to improve. Throughout the school, including in each classroom, there are attendance displays to encourage full attendance. The school regularly celebrates those pupils with full attendance. Through research, the school has identified a school in a similar context that had improved its attendance significantly. Strategies learned from this school have recently been implemented. This has enabled the school's systems to be revised so that there is greater focus on specific groups. There is also greater emphasis on working closely with parents when their children start in school.
- Each teacher knows their persistent absentees and works closely with parents to improve attendance. Each week, the senior leadership team monitors attendance

information and ensures that low attendance is followed up. Governors have provided additional funding to appoint an attendance officer to support leaders in this priority. There have been some individual successes; however, attendance remains below the national averages.

- Finally, we agreed to look at how the school's arrangements for pastoral care help pupils make good progress. This was because you considered this to be a strength of the school in supporting the needs of all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged. By the end of Year 6, your disadvantaged pupils do well. This has been recognised by the Department for Education, which has invited your school to participate in a pilot project focusing on your successful practice.
- Teachers are aware of the needs of all their pupils. Their individual staff planners provide comprehensive information on every pupil in their class. This helps them to plan effectively to meet each child's needs. Evidence from classroom visits shows that all adults are making a difference to pupils' learning. In all sessions, pupils are fully engaged and motivated to learn.
- Each term, teachers arrange pupil progress meetings with their pupils. This enables each pupil in the school to discuss with their teacher how well they are doing and what further help they require. As a result, pupils are better prepared to meet the end-of-year targets set for them.
- Meetings with pupils show that the school provides a range of strategies to support its pupils. These focus on both their learning and social development as well as anything else that is relevant to their specific learning needs. This includes poor attendance. For example, pupils at risk of exclusion have been supported through additional measures, including the use of external agencies. As a result, exclusions have reduced. Those pupils who have behavioural problems have been supported by the school's pastoral team. This has resulted in unacceptable behaviour at lunchtime being reduced.
- A review of sample case studies demonstrates a comprehensive range of interventions to meet the diverse needs of pupils. Records show progress for pupils in three key areas: independence, confidence and attitude to learning; social skills and relationships; and behaviour and the ability to make well-informed choices. There is compelling evidence to show that the planned pastoral support for pupils is having a positive impact on progress and behaviour.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- overall attendance improves and persistent absence reduces for all pupils and especially key groups.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Havering. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Barnes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I carried out the following activities:

- met with the principal and senior leaders
- held meetings with members of the governing body, chair and chief education officer of the multi-academy trust board
- met with the school's improvement partner
- listened to pupils read
- met with groups of pupils
- reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, case studies and information about pupil progress
- scrutinised a range of pupils' work
- reviewed the school's single central record, pre-employment checks and safeguarding procedures
- scrutinised the school's website
- considered 41 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and one parent letter
- considered 24 responses to the staff survey
- visited lessons in classes with members of the leadership team.