

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



7 February 2018

Mrs Claire Jones
Headteacher
Eastcombe Primary School
Dr Crouch's Road
Eastcombe
Stroud
Gloucestershire
GL6 7EA

Dear Mrs Jones

Short inspection of Eastcombe Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school. Since the last inspection, there have been considerable changes to the staffing of this small school, including your appointment as headteacher. As headteacher, you demonstrate a very clear commitment to improving the outcomes that pupils achieve. You have high expectations of both staff and pupils. You have a clear vision for the school and have successfully built an ethos for the school that both staff and governors share. Since your arrival, you and governors have made some difficult decisions concerning the structure and organisation of this small school. Your robust and effective actions have resulted in a marked improvement in the quality of teaching, and, therefore, in pupils' progress and attainment. Pupils said that teachers make their learning interesting and varied. Many enjoy the challenge of improving their work further. The attendance of current pupils is above the national average.

At the time of the last inspection, the school was asked to improve teaching further by ensuring that teachers took advantage of opportunities to extend pupils' learning. Inspection evidence this time showed that pupils have strong attitudes to learning. Pupils and teachers talk together about pupils' learning, particularly in key stage 2. For example, activities that prepare pupils for writing, such as a whole-class shared writing session prior to writing a Viking saga, helped pupils to then write well. More of them are now writing at a deeper level.

The school was also asked to improve pupils' grammatical and spelling skills and to give

pupils more opportunities to practise their writing skills in other subjects. Inspection this time showed that pupils have skills in spelling and grammar that are in line with pupils nationally of a similar age. An increasing proportion of older pupils are using their skills to write at a more complex level. Across the wider curriculum, there is evidence that pupils write in a range of types of text, particularly in science and history.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all staff receive regular training in relation to safeguarding. Consequently, school staff, and governors, are clear what they will do if they have a concern about a child. Policies, such as the school's Safeguarding policy, are informative and up to date. Leaders of safeguarding are swift to take action to keep vulnerable pupils safe. Their record-keeping is timely and detailed. The high priority placed on safeguarding is evident from the information on the school's website. The single central record is well kept and procedures for the recruitment of new staff, and their induction, mean that they are clear about the importance the school places on safeguarding. Governors monitor the school's safeguarding practice, for example through their visits to the school and in the joint writing and review of the annual safeguarding audit with the school's leaders.

Pupils clearly told me that they feel safe and happy at school. They were confident that if they had a worry or concern, adults would help them to sort it out. Pupils behave well in classes and around the school, for example at breaktimes. They are, rightly, proud of their school, and pupils who have joined the school commented on how welcome and friendly the school is. Parents agreed that their children are well looked after and safe at school. When I talked with pupils they told me accurately what bullying is. They felt that it does not happen often at their school. In the main, their parents agree. Pupils are also aware of the steps they can take to keep themselves safe when using computers and the internet.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I looked carefully at how well pupils write. This is because pupils' progress in writing in 2016 and 2017 was less good than their progress in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 6. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that there has been a considerable improvement in standards of handwriting, spelling and grammar in the last two years. This is as a result of your swift actions on your arrival at the school to focus on phonics, spelling and handwriting. The improvements to the quality of teaching, which you have led, are resulting in pupils working more securely to the raised expectations of spelling, grammar and handwriting under the new assessment framework. For example, the proportion of pupils reaching the threshold of the national phonics screening check in Year 1 has now been well above the national level for the last two years. At the end of Year 6 in both 2016 and 2017, more pupils reached the expected standards for their age in the English grammar, spelling and punctuation test than pupils nationally. The proportion of pupils reaching a higher level in this test was at the national level. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that changes in the teaching of phonics and in the school's approach to handwriting have improved spelling and handwriting across all year groups in the school. Your effective

actions have meant that any pupils who needed to catch up on lost learning have done so briskly.

- Teachers make effective use of activities such as shared writing sessions, and talking about writing, to help prepare pupils to write well. Ideas are shared between teachers and pupils. These strategies are successful in providing pupils, including boys, with more ideas and a sounder structure to support them when writing. This is helping to increase pupils' engagement in writing, resulting in more boys, as well as girls, writing at a more complex level. These approaches are also successful in supporting pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities to make good progress in their writing. In this, they are skilfully supported by the school's teaching assistants. Leaders know that some pupils need to increase their stamina for writing further.
- The school's curriculum design is increasing opportunities for pupils to write at length across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 5 and Year 6, as part of their topic on Egyptians, have written about the mummification process in science as well as recounts and diary entries in history about the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb by Howard Carter. In Year 2, pupils wrote in detail about ways in which different animals, such as newts, herons and otters, adapt to their habitats.
- Expectations of pupils' writing, including handwriting, spelling and punctuation, are high. These are extended to pupils' writing across the curriculum and in mathematics. Pupils' work shows that they understand these expectations. However, you agree that there are times in some curriculum work when a few of the most able pupils could write in more depth. You also agree that, on occasion, in mathematics some of the most able pupils could more briskly reach and complete tasks which involve explaining their reasoning.
- I looked to see how well disadvantaged pupils do at the school. There are few disadvantaged pupils at any one time in the school. Over time, disadvantaged pupils make progress similar to, and sometimes better progress than, other pupils. The most able disadvantaged pupils make strong progress. Leaders and teachers are ambitious for these pupils and the expectations placed on them are high. The strategies in place ensure that disadvantaged pupils across the school are making good progress from their starting points. The additional funds for these pupils are well spent. Governors have, however, identified that they want to develop further their existing monitoring practices, for example by incorporating more opportunities to gather pupils' views about their learning.
- Finally, I looked to see what the school is doing to ensure effective provision for pupils in key stage 1. As headteacher, you have made changes to the organisation and structure of the key stage 1 and Reception class. You have been successful in raising the expectations placed on pupils and adults. This means that the learning pupils receive in key stage 1 is well matched to their needs and to the increased demands of new national assessments. Pupils' work demonstrates the benefits they are experiencing from effective phonics teaching and that changes to the teaching of handwriting have helped them to read and write well. For example, the most able pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 can write in detail and at some length, such as about the Great Fire of London. However, you recognise that there is more to be done to ensure that the tasks pupils receive are framed to encourage high-quality writing in

some areas, such as aspects of science. In the early years, children are acquiring the skills they need in early reading, writing and mathematics to make a sound start to the learning they will meet in Year 1. For example, children in the Reception Year can use their phonics skills to write simple sentences.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are helped across the curriculum to increase their ability to write at length
- in mathematics, the most able pupils have opportunities to move on more quickly to work that challenges their skills of reasoning and their understanding
- governors further refine their monitoring of the school's work, for example by increasing their gathering of pupils' views on their learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah O'Donnell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we visited lessons together and conducted a learning walk across the school. We looked at pupils' work with them and spoke with them about their learning. We looked together at books from every year group in the school to check on pupils' progress. I asked pupils to read to me from their reading books and from their own work. I spoke to pupils outside during breaktime and met with a group of pupils to hear their views on school life.

I talked with you and a middle leader about developments in the school since the last inspection. I met with governors and also met a representative from the local authority. I looked at the school's single central record and other documents concerning the recruitment of staff and safeguarding. I considered the 26 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and the nine comments submitted. I spoke with a parent on the telephone.