

15 March 2018

Mr Aaron Meredith
Headteacher
Ernesettle Community School
Biggin Hill
Ernesettle
Plymouth
Devon
PL5 2RB

Dear Mr Meredith

Short inspection of Ernesettle Community School

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You and your team have worked with a strong commitment to increase the aspirations and achievement of pupils. You have an unrelenting determination to maintain high expectations, and both pupils and staff have worked hard to live up to these expectations. Standards have risen significantly and been sustained since your predecessor school was last inspected.

Staff said that there is a shared commitment to ensuring that all pupils and adults flourish in the school. They said that they feel well supported by leaders and appreciate the clarity and consistency of policies and procedures, which they believe have contributed to the success of the school. Staff said that they feel that leaders use professional development well to encourage, challenge and support ongoing improvement in the quality of their teaching.

Together with other leaders and governors, you systematically check how well

pupils are progressing, using the information effectively to make any necessary changes to teaching methods or to provide additional support. Teachers meet regularly with leaders to review pupils' progress and identify any underachievement. Your systems are rigorous and well established, and have made a strong contribution to the high standards achieved by the pupils.

Governors are supportive of your work. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the school, the community and the challenges you face. They ask useful and important questions to ensure that leaders focus on the right things to continue to improve the school. Governors use their own knowledge and skills to support you to continue to raise standards and carry out a range of tasks in school, including working with leaders to review pupils' work.

Parents praised school staff for their dedication to meeting the needs of their children. One parent said, 'The school staff go above and beyond' and this sentiment was reflected in other comments from parents during the inspection and through Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They gave specific examples of how leaders have made adaptations to ensure that pupils with different needs are catered for.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding and all arrangements are fit for purpose. Processes to check that staff are suitable to work with children are comprehensive and records are well maintained. Staff have up-to-date training and are alert to any signs of risk. It is everyone's responsibility to contribute to the school's system for identifying concerns and monitoring any pupils at risk of harm. You maintain good links with other agencies so that pupils are supported and kept safe.

Leaders and governors have prioritised the personal development and welfare of pupils by funding a parent support adviser. Support for vulnerable pupils is very personalised and kept under close review. Consequently, pupils flourish at the school.

Pupils said that they feel safe. They understand about bullying and know what to do if they see anything that concerns them. They have confidence in their teachers to deal with anything that is worrying them.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, as well as evaluating safeguarding arrangements, we agreed that the inspection would look at how effectively leaders ensure that all groups of pupils in the early years and key stage 1 are making good progress. Also, the inspection focused on whether teaching is consistently effective across the school and across subjects, particularly writing.
- For the last two years, the national assessments at the end of key stage 2 have indicated that pupils at Ernesettle have made progress in reading and

mathematics that is significantly better than the national average. Progress in writing has also been above the national average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard and the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined has been well above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the national assessments at the end of key stage 1 in 2017 was also above the national average, although the proportion working at greater depth was below it. Boys and disadvantaged pupils did not achieve as well as girls and non-disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1. Nevertheless, the pupils have made good progress overall since joining the school. As a result of effective self-evaluation, leaders have recognised this as a priority and built clear targets for improvement.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been above the national average for the past three years. This is the result of well-structured phonics teaching tailored to the pupils' needs, with learning tasks that they clearly enjoy.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the early years has been below the national average for the last two years. However, because a large proportion of the children start school with skills and knowledge well below what is typical for their age, the children have made good progress overall. Nevertheless, boys and disadvantaged children in the early years did not achieve as well as girls and non-disadvantaged children. The children's learning journals show that the children currently in the Reception classes are also making good progress overall.
- In the early years, the indoor and outdoor learning opportunities offer a range of experiences to help children gain confidence and develop key skills. Staff have identified that a significant proportion of children join the school with language skills below the level typical for their age, and they work with the children to develop their expressive and receptive language. This includes stories, rhymes, games and role play. However, the early years environment does not yet clearly reflect this priority. It does not give children experience of a wide range of written and spoken language as well as different opportunities to write for themselves as part of their play activities.
- Disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 achieved very well in 2016 and 2017, for which the school has received regional recognition. These pupils have made better progress than other pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- The school's information about pupils' learning and the work in their books show that current learners in the school are continuing to make rapid and sustained progress. Teachers adjust teaching to ensure that the needs of different groups of pupils are met, and use assessment systematically as a routine part of their teaching. Teachers are prompt to identify pupils who may need extra help or may benefit from additional challenge, which results in good progress.
- You and other leaders monitor the quality of provision systematically, providing ongoing developmental feedback and guidance. Ensuring consistently good

teaching has been, and continues to be, a key priority for you. Observations of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' books have allowed leaders to identify and share good practice as well as to address any weaker elements.

- Teachers use a range of questioning strategies skilfully to check pupils' understanding and to challenge pupils to think deeply about the problems they have to solve. This is resulting in pupils who are willing to keep trying, even when things are difficult, and who work well independently. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils were challenged to work out the volume of a complex shape using incomplete information. They found this difficult, but were able to discuss the problem and find a solution as a result of their own dialogue and the excellent questioning of the teacher.
- Teachers and teaching assistants working with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities ensure that they receive individualised support so that their experience of learning and school is positive and productive. As a result of the good support provided, even pupils who have gaps in their understanding and who struggle to learn new ideas are willing to keep trying and show a determination to succeed.
- Pupils behave very well. Their attitudes to learning are exemplary and classrooms are typically calm and purposeful. As a result of good feedback, pupils receive helpful advice on how to improve their work. Skilled teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and boys in the early years and key stage 1 continue to improve
- the learning environment continues to improve in order to strengthen language development in the early years.

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 Plymouth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Janet Ross
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I visited classes with either you or one of your assistant headteachers. I also visited a phonics session. I looked at the work in pupils' books during lessons, as well as looking separately at a sample of pupils' work with your leaders. I talked with pupils during my visits to the classrooms.

I met with you and your assistant headteachers during the inspection. I also met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and spoke with your family support worker, administrator and human resources support.

I took account of 240 responses to Parent View and spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day. I also considered 45 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.

I reviewed the school's website and information about the school's academic performance. I considered a range of documents, including your summary of the school's effectiveness, the school improvement plan, information related to pupil premium funding and an external adviser's reports. I also looked at documents related to safeguarding.