

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



20 March 2018

Mrs Nicky Hand

Headteacher  
Graveley Primary School  
Ashwell Common  
Graveley  
Hitchin  
Hertfordshire  
SG4 7LJ

Dear Mrs Hand

### **Short inspection of Graveley Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 08 March 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 September 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team provide effective and thoughtful leadership, based on your clear evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This is a school whose values and ethos reflect its caring character. Since joining the school as headteacher in September 2017, you have brought enthusiasm and positivity to your leadership, which colleagues, governors and parents recognise and appreciate. Staff enjoy their work and feel appropriately supported and professionally challenged. Parents and pupils are happy with their school, many valuing its warm and friendly atmosphere and its good academic standards.

Parents and carers I spoke to informally at the start of the day were really pleased with the school. Typical comments included, 'The school never stands still, the staff are always finding new and exciting ways to learn' and 'My child loves his teacher; if there is ever a problem it is dealt with straight away.' These views were endorsed by the overwhelming majority of the 28 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and by the very large majority of parents who texted about their perceptions of the school.

Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and around school. They are polite and respectful to each other, and they are courteous and sociable with staff and visitors.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have improved the way that learning is organised in the early years, providing more opportunities for children to develop their skills, particularly in the outdoor area. Teachers have improved their assessment strategies so that any gaps in pupils' learning are quickly addressed. More pupils are now reaching the higher standards in reading by the end of key stage 2. Leaders have made good use of the support they have received from Herts for Learning, and this has improved the quality of professional development and training that have been provided to staff. The decision, supported by the governors, to invest in improvements to teaching of reading, has helped establish a strong culture of reading. Reading is a strength of the school and leaders are rightly conscious of the need to ensure that pupils do equally well in mathematics.

Governors' decisions are based on reliable information about the school's priorities for improvement. Governors visit the school regularly, and they have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors offer a good level of support and professional challenge to senior leaders. Governors recognise and appreciate the commitment being shown by the newly formed senior leadership team, and the hard work and enthusiasm of all members of staff. They review a range of evidence to help them make decisions. When creating the new senior leadership team, for example, governors carefully considered the financial implications, the impact on pupils' learning and the professional development needs of staff.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that the school's safeguarding arrangements are well organised, securely maintained and fit for purpose. Records of staff and volunteers' suitability to work with children are clear and comprehensive. Staff understand their role in keeping pupils safe at school. Staff are confident in their understanding of how to report any concerns, and the designated safeguarding leaders liaise appropriately with other agencies, ensuring that concerns are followed up in a timely manner.

The pupils I spoke to informally around the school told me that they feel safe and happy at school. Parents' views were also positive. The vast majority agreed that pupils are safe and well cared for at school, with many choosing to express how secure and assured their children feel.

### **Inspection findings**

- To ascertain whether the school remained good, one of my key lines of enquiry was about the progress that pupils make in mathematics in key stage 2. In recent years, attainment and progress in reading has been much stronger than in mathematics. In 2017, for example, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard in mathematics was 14% compared with 23% nationally. In reading, by contrast, 50% of pupils reached the higher standard, compared with 25% nationally.

- Leaders are well aware of this anomaly. Work is already taking place to raise pupils' achievement in mathematics. For example, in September 2017, leaders introduced a new lesson planning pro forma, designed to deepen pupils' understanding and improve their reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- When we visited lessons, it was evident that this new approach is already having a positive impact. In one lesson, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils were successfully manipulating equipment to help them visualise and solve algebraic equations. This represented a good level of challenge for pupils, and their learning was further reinforced by the teacher's effective use of continual assessment throughout the lesson.
- Pupils were responding well to their teachers' high expectations in mathematics lessons. Pupils listened carefully to adults' clear explanations. The work in pupils' mathematics books was well presented and appropriately challenging. Pupils have responded well to the useful feedback teachers have provided.
- The school's own assessment information shows that pupils currently in key stage 2 are making improved progress in mathematics. More pupils are now on track to exceed national expectations. Nevertheless, leaders are clear that this work to improve mathematics needs to continue. These new approaches to the teaching of mathematics need to become embedded, so that outcomes improve for those pupils capable of achieving at the higher standard.
- Another key line of enquiry was about the quality of work that pupils undertake in subjects other than English and mathematics. The school's website includes information about the content of this wider curriculum, but it was important to check whether pupils are receiving the same quality of teaching and learning as they do in English and mathematics.
- The school has developed a creative curriculum, and pupils enjoy studying topics which include a wide range of subjects and skills. A recent topic studied by Year 5 and Year 6 pupils was called 'Lights, Camera, Action' and featured a visit to a local film studio, which pupils thoroughly enjoyed. Teachers plan a number of these exciting events in order to stimulate pupils' interest and encourage their enjoyment of learning. A 1980s disco, where everyone was encouraged to dress up, was another recent example of teachers planning a memorable experience to introduce a recent history topic.
- Work in pupils' topic books shows that they are developing a good range of skills across the curriculum. Nevertheless, pupils' topic work is not as well presented as their work in English, mathematics and science. Consequently, I asked you to ensure that teachers insist on the same high expectations for presenting their work across all subjects.
- My final line of enquiry was about the teaching of formal conventions in writing. In 2017, outcomes in national assessments for grammar, punctuation and spelling at the end of key stage 2 were lower than expected.
- Leaders have acted quickly to ensure that additional priority is given to this area. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 now receive an entire lesson dedicated to grammar, punctuation and spelling every week. Older pupils have a daily session as part of every English lesson. Work seen in pupils' books confirms that pupils are

becoming more familiar with the key terminology of grammar and punctuation and applying this more successfully in their writing. I asked you to ensure that this work continues, and to monitor progress carefully in order to maximise outcomes for pupils.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- new approaches to the teaching of mathematical reasoning and problem-solving are embedded, in order to
  - increase the percentage of pupils who make good progress
  - increase the percentage of pupils attaining at the higher level in national assessments at the end of key stage 2
- standards in writing are further improved by securing recent changes to the teaching of grammar and punctuation
- the presentation of work in topic books improves, by insisting on the same high expectations as seen in English, maths and science books.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicholas Rudman  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you to discuss the school's priorities for development and the impact of actions taken. I also met the leaders who have responsibility for English and mathematics. I met with four governors, including the chair. I spoke on the telephone to the Hertfordshire improvement partner. I scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including the school's self-evaluation, governing body minutes of meetings, plans and records for the use of additional funding, and the school's assessment information. I checked the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children, and information relating to attendance. We undertook joint observations of learning across the school, looked at work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons. I analysed information from Parent View, Ofsted's online system for collecting the views of parents, including responses received by free-text. I also analysed responses from pupils and staff giving their views of the school.