

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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James Williams
Headteacher
Garlinge Primary School and Nursery
Westfield Road
Margate
Kent
CT9 5PA

Dear Mr Williams

Short inspection of Garlinge Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 2018 with Ofsted inspector, David Meades, 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You provide highly effective and inspirational leadership for this school, which clearly has 'inclusion at its heart'. You have created a very strong leadership team that demonstrates strong capacity to improve the school further. You have an unwavering commitment and determination to provide the best possible experiences for all pupils in a happy, calm and aspirational environment. Your deputy headteachers share your vision, ambition and pursuit of excellence, and together you provide very strong, strategic senior leadership. Leaders, staff and governors are very proud of the school and have every confidence in your leadership.

Senior leaders and governors conduct a wide range of monitoring activities that effectively and accurately identify the school's strengths and areas for further development. You have correctly identified a continuing focus on further improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. You have successfully built on the strengths identified at the previous inspection and have addressed the areas that were identified for improvement. For example, in 2017, the proportion of pupils who reached higher levels of attainment by the end of key stage 2 increased from the previous year. The proportion was above that found nationally in writing but remained below the national average in reading and mathematics.

You have led the school exceptionally well during its rapid expansion to a four-form

entry school, and managed the new building work to accommodate the increasing roll. During this time, you have ensured that the quality of teaching and learning has been maintained. You have expanded the school's leadership with an effective team of assistant headteachers. They use their skills and expertise to work with colleagues and share good and outstanding practice. As well as a skilled teaching staff, you have a large team of skilled teaching assistants. They make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning by providing support to meet the wide range of pupils' needs. This includes pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who have specific speech, language and communication needs. You have correctly identified that there is further scope to ensure that pupils of all abilities develop resilience as learners and 'can do' attitudes so they are not afraid to make mistakes and know they can learn from them.

Pupils are nurtured at the school and thrive in the calm, orderly environment. They are happy and safe and behave well, showing respect for each other and adults. Pupils are enthusiastic and proud of their school. A group agreed with one pupil who said, 'All the children get on well. We all listen to each other and try to help each other.' Pupils feel valued and part of a close community. One parent, whose children were new to the school, wrote, 'I was concerned about how well they would settle in a new school. All the staff at Garlinge were fantastic and made them feel very welcome. I was concerned about the size of the school as it felt so big at first, but the space and children are very well managed and the pastoral support is excellent.'

The school motto, 'Be a PART of Garlinge', reflects the school values of Perseverance, Aspiration, Respect and Teamwork, which pervade every aspect of the school's work. One parent commented that her child 'comes home engaged and informed, and regularly recites the school values!'

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of care and safeguarding at the school, and you ensure that pupils' welfare is paramount. You, the deputy headteachers and the family liaison officer are designated safeguarding leads, and, in addition, the school has appointed a safeguarding officer who is also trained in this role. This ensures that there is always a skilled and experienced person for staff to go to if they have any concerns. Staff recognise that child protection is everyone's responsibility. All staff receive effective training including updates to meet any new requirements in keeping children safe from a variety of risks, including those related to online safety. There are very clear procedures in place, and staff are vigilant in following these.

Inclusion and safeguarding teams are proactive in supporting pupils to keep themselves and others safe. Play-leader pupils in key stage 1 explained how they lead by example and 'make sure that everyone's being kind to each other'. Pupils spoke to inspectors about a visit from the NSPCC, which they said helped them have the confidence to 'speak out and stay safe'. Staff work with determination to

forge good relationships with parents and carers, building on trust and mutual respect. This helps to ensure that any needs are known and that support for pupils and their families, including from external agencies, is timely and effective. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and fit for purpose and records are suitably and efficiently kept.

Pupils said that they feel safe in school and that they are confident to turn to adults if they have any concerns. Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that the school keeps their children safe.

You, staff and governors have worked extremely hard to improve pupils' attendance. You and your teams are resourceful and creative and go the extra mile to support families, particularly those in which pupils are persistently absent. Attendance is improving as a result of your efforts but remains a little below the national figure.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we looked at specific aspects of the school's provision, including the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, pupils' achievement in reading and writing, the impact of the work of leaders on the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum, and the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- For the past two years, pupils have made much better progress from their starting points in writing than in reading. In 2017, although pupils' progress in reading and mathematics was similar to that found nationally, it was significantly above the national average in writing. Pupils have many opportunities to apply their writing skills for a range of purposes across the curriculum. Teachers' expectations are consistently high whether pupils are writing in English lessons or in their topic books. These aspects and teachers' clear knowledge of how pupils develop as writers have helped pupils to make rapid progress. In 2017, the proportions of pupils reaching age-related expectations and greater depth in their writing were above those found nationally.
- You have taken positive and determined action to improve pupils' progress in reading. A range of strategies is successfully raising the profile of reading across the school. Teachers often base learning across a range of subjects on a key text, carefully chosen to motivate and inspire pupils. Where needed, extra support is provided, particularly to develop pupils' language skills to support their reading development. Star readers are celebrated. Pupils are encouraged to read at home and read for pleasure and strive with enthusiasm to receive certificates as reader of the week for their efforts. The impact on pupils' achievement is evident as reading progress is improving and current pupils are making similarly good progress in reading to their progress in writing.
- Leaders ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is carefully checked. You acknowledge that the further development of pupils' resilience as learners will help them secure the best outcomes. The curriculum is broad, balanced and successfully designed to meet the needs as well as the interests of all groups of learners. Staff work very hard to plan topics that inspire and motivate all pupils.

As well as an appropriate focus on basic skills, you ensure that pupils have a wide range of opportunities to learn new skills. Sports, music and the arts are given high profile in the school, and pupils have exceptional opportunities to participate in a huge variety of sports. Pupils spoke of their enjoyment of the range of clubs and learning in the Forest School.

- Leaders and governors have ensured that there are robust procedures to keep a check on the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils to make sure that it is having an impact on their achievement. As a result of your ongoing and uncompromising focus on this group, which is approximately one third of the school, pupils currently in the school are making better progress from their starting points in all areas. You have correctly identified a continuing focus on this group to further diminish the differences in their attainment and that of others.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils have even more opportunities to take the initiative, be resourceful and strengthen their resilience and 'can do' attitudes
- they build on successful strategies and continue to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspectors met with you, your deputy headteachers and other leaders in the school. The lead inspector met with four governors, including the chair and the vice-chairs of the governing body, and a local authority adviser. You or your deputies accompanied us on our visits to classes. During these visits, the inspectors spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at their work. Inspectors also observed pupils in the playground and met with members of the school council to ask them for their views on the school. Inspectors reviewed the school's website and sampled a range of documents and records including: information about pupils' achievement; leaders' checks on the quality of teaching; the school improvement plan; your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness; and documents relating to safeguarding. We took into account 54 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 22 free-text comments. We also considered 80 responses to

Ofsted's staff survey and 82 responses to the pupil survey.