

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Lucy Overton
Great Tey Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Chrismund Way
Great Tey
Colchester
Essex
CO6 1AZ

Dear Mrs Overton

Short inspection of Great Tey Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 July 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Great Tey Primary School provides a happy and vibrant place to learn, in which pupils feel safe, are well cared for and are encouraged to do their very best. As a very small but growing village school, all staff know the pupils and families well. Pupils are exceptionally well mannered and articulate. They step aside politely to let adults pass through doors first, greet and welcome visitors to their school routinely and show great kindness and support towards one another.

All parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, expressed positive views about the school. One parent wrote, 'This school is a unique and a rather special place to be.'

You are unequivocal in your vision for the school, which is that everyone will thrive and love learning, no matter what their ability or background. This makes the school highly inclusive. Governors and staff are committed to ensuring that pupils are treated as individuals, including understanding their varying abilities and strengths. A parent said, 'My child has been accepted for who she is without question.'

Governance is strong and has supported you in making the right appointments to ensure the school's continued improvement. Governors are skilled and thorough in

their checks of leaders' actions. They make sure that evaluations of how well the school is performing are accurate through their link roles and visits to school.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to raise the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement to outstanding. Since you took up the position of headteacher in September 2015, you have been able to establish a stable staff, following a period of turbulence. The school has grown from two to three classes and the number of pupils has nearly doubled. We agreed that the quality of teaching is strengthening. You have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching and increase the challenge for the most able pupils. We observed teachers challenging pupils to think hard and deepen their learning. Your actions have led to better outcomes in reading, with pupils having more opportunities to read suitable books in the improved library facilities.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is systematic attention to detail in safeguarding practice from every member of staff in school and governors. You have created a culture where staff regularly have the opportunity to reflect on their training, which improves their confidence and ability to recognise and respond to signs of concern. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. Everyone understands the importance of the 'Prevent' duty and they take measures to ensure that pupils are protected from radicalisation, for example through the strong sense of community and belonging which the school instils.

Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare and they trust that adults will sort out any incidents of misbehaviour. They know whom to talk to if they have any concerns and are aware of different types of bullying which could occur. They confidently explain how to stay safe online. They particularly enjoy buddying with younger pupils, with one pupil saying, 'The school is fun, we all play together whatever the year group and we get on.' This helps the younger pupils to feel safe and included within the school community, and also develops older pupils' understanding of the importance of supporting and making a contribution to their school.

Inspection findings

- In order to check that the school remains good, I followed a number of lines of enquiry. My first line of enquiry focused on what leaders are doing to promote good attendance. This was because, over the last three years, attendance rates have fallen and the proportion of pupils who are persistent non-attenders has increased.
- You have ensured that attendance is a priority for the school. Attendance is monitored closely on a daily basis and action is taken where necessary, following the school attendance protocol. As a result, the overall attendance has improved and the number of persistent non-attenders has declined. You are determined that improvement in pupils' attendance continues.
- My next line of enquiry was to establish how well pupils achieve in writing. This was because, in key stage 2 in 2017, the progress pupils made in writing from

their starting points was much lower than other pupils nationally.

- You undertook an analysis of the reasons for the results. Pupils with specific barriers are supported to improve their writing. For example, you have established small groups for what you call narrative therapy, where pupils develop an understanding of story and, as a result, they now understand what to write.
- You have ensured that teachers are regularly assessing pupils' attainment in writing. They check the judgements with other local professionals to ensure their accuracy and to identify where any improvements are required. The school's own assessment information shows that current pupils are improving their writing throughout the school. Evidence from pupils' writing on progress boards and in their progress folders showed that a large majority of pupils were making sufficient progress across the year. However, we agreed that pupils would make more progress if they used the well-taught grammar, punctuation and spelling skills in their writing in all subjects.
- My final line of enquiry looked at how well pupils develop knowledge and skills in areas of the curriculum other than English and mathematics. I wanted to determine how leaders are ensuring that pupils make consistently good progress across all subject areas.
- We found that subject knowledge and skills are being taught and, where this has been more successful, pupils are able to apply their knowledge in different contexts. For example, a pupil picked up a three-dimensional model of a rainforest, and trees that had been attached came off. The pupil used the term 'deforestation' to describe what had happened, thus linking specific subject vocabulary to a relevant event.
- Pupils are involved in a wide range of musical experiences, attending yearly music festivals with local schools. They talk excitedly about how much they enjoy these. We saw evidence in books of pupils gaining a range of vocabulary when learning modern foreign languages.
- You feel that pupils could be further challenged to excel in each subject area. You rightly identified that reasoning and explanation skills in subjects such as geography, design and technology and art are areas to improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve the quality of pupils' writing in all subject areas by ensuring that pupils apply their high-quality grammar, punctuation and spelling skills
- pupils have even more opportunities to develop the specific skills needed in subjects other than English and mathematics
- they continue to improve the attendance of those who are persistent non-attenders.

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

Yours sincerely

Cassandra Williams
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

At the start of the inspection, we discussed the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' learning. Documents, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, governors' minutes and the school improvement plans, were evaluated. The school's safeguarding arrangements, records, files and documentation were examined. Discussions were held with the safeguarding leaders. Together, we observed pupils' learning in classes. We looked at samples of pupils' work in each class to evaluate the progress that pupils are making over time. I spoke informally with pupils during lessons regarding their learning. I also met with a group of pupils during lunch and observed breaktime. I met with the chair of the governing body and four other governors. The views of the 44 parents who responded to Parent View, the seven staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 25 pupils who completed the online pupil questionnaire were taken into account. I considered 40 parental comments from the free-text service available during the inspection.