

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



15 October 2018

Mrs Jenny Sheppard
Headteacher
Prae Wood Primary School
King Harry Lane
St Albans
Hertfordshire
AL3 4HZ

Dear Mrs Sheppard

Short inspection of Prae Wood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 October 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 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. 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 specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Pupils are extremely well cared for in terms of both their welfare and the quality of the education that they benefit from. This is recognised by nearly all the parents, carers and pupils who responded to the Ofsted questionnaires. Typically, pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning because of the very effective teaching and learning that are underpinned by an enriching and sophisticated curriculum. Across a range of subjects, pupils in all year groups are developing the necessary depth of knowledge and understanding that are preparing nearly all of them very well for the next stage in their education.

The school is very well led by you and your team of leaders. In all the areas examined during the inspection, it was evident that where there was a relative weakness, action has been taken that has had the necessary impact on improving the quality of provision or outcomes. For example, there has been significant increase in the numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language since the last inspection. The improvements made mean that by the time they leave Year 6, these pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education and many exceed expectations.

Since the last inspection, improvements have been made in all areas that were recommended. For example, in mathematics, progress across the school is at least good and standards each year are above average because of the consistently effective teaching.

The school is well supported by an effective governing body that ensures that all statutory requirements are met. Governors keep a careful check on the quality of education and outcomes. The school's self-evaluation does not reflect well enough the impact of the improvements that have been made since the previous inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

Checks made when recruiting staff are secure. All staff have received the necessary training to safeguard pupils. Records show that leaders take robust and timely action to protect pupils from harm.

There are several vulnerable pupils that the school is proving very effective in supporting. Not only do you work effectively with outside agencies to support these pupils and their families but you provide a range of services, such as counselling and mentoring in school, so that pupils are given the support they need to make good progress. School leaders and staff take the mental health of pupils very seriously and have recently implemented a range of additional activities to help pupils feel more safe and secure.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are well looked after and appear safe and secure in the early years environment.

Inspection findings

- In 2018, national assessment information indicates that by the end of Year 6 pupils made slower progress in writing than they did in reading and mathematics. In addition, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard in writing by the end of Year 2 was lower than in reading and mathematics.
- Work in books shows that over time all groups of pupils have made at least good progress. Even those who did not reach expectations in Year 2 are making good progress from their starting points. Pupils have many opportunities to write at length in a range of subjects, and the work of many of them is of a high standard.
- In 2016 and 2017, the number of pupils in Year 1 who reached the expected standard in phonics declined. In 2018, assessment information indicates that this decline has been reversed.
- Phonics lessons are taught effectively by well-trained teaching assistants and teachers. Assessment information shows that in Year 3 all pupils who did not reach the expected standard in phonics in Year 1 have now caught up with their reading.
- In each year group, there are a very small number of disadvantaged pupils. Assessment information shows that generally their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is lower than for other pupils by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.

- It is evident that school leaders and teachers work effectively to overcome the barriers to learning for nearly all disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, these pupils' work shows that they make good progress. Nevertheless, this good progress for some is not sufficient to ensure that by the end of Year 6 these pupils are as well prepared as the others for the next stage in their education.
- An examination of the teaching and learning in a range of subjects, including science, history and geography, shows that pupils benefit from a rich curriculum. For example, pupils spoke knowledgeably about the differences between a virus and bacteria in a Year 6 science lesson. In religious education, following a trip to a Buddhist temple, pupils demonstrated what they had learned from the experience, recalling much interesting information.
- In all years, there is a consistency in the quality of teaching in a range of subjects. Where necessary, teachers with subject specialisms work to enrich the quality of learning. For example, in physical education lessons, pupils benefit from very effective teaching.
- Since the last inspection, the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language has increased considerably to approximately a quarter of the school population. Many of these pupils are new to English and are admitted into the school outside of the normal admission dates.
- Over the last two years, school leaders have taken effective action to train staff to teach these pupils English quickly and to provide the appropriate provision to meet their needs. Assessment information and the work in books show that by the end of Year 6, these pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- steps are taken to further improve the quality of education for disadvantaged pupils so that by the end of Year 6 more of them are well prepared for the next stage in their education
- self-evaluation is more sharply focused on the impact of improvements on pupils' well-being and outcomes to the quality of education experienced by all 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 Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I visited nearly all classes to talk to pupils, to observe teaching, learning and the behaviour of pupils, and to examine the work in books. A range of school documents, including safeguarding records, the school improvement plan, assessment information and the school self-evaluation, were examined. Meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, members of staff responsible for the administration of safeguarding records and child protection, a representative from the local authority, some governors and a group of pupils. I scrutinised the questionnaire responses from 131 parents, 41 staff and 133 pupils.