

East Farleigh Primary School

Vicarage Lane, East Farleigh, Maidstone, Kent ME15 0LY

Inspection dates

22–23 January 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The school has not maintained the quality of education since the last inspection. Leaders and governors recognise that it requires improvement and have appropriate plans in place.
- Attainment in English and mathematics is not high enough at the end of key stage 2. Standards have dropped since the last inspection. While pupils' progress has recently started to improve, they do not achieve well enough in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly at key stage 2.
- While there is some effective teaching, the overall quality of teaching varies too much. Teaching does not build pupils' skills and knowledge as well as it should, particularly in writing. Tasks are not always well matched to pupils' abilities. As a result, pupils do not make enough progress over time.
- The most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently and do not achieve as well as they should. Teachers' expectations of these pupils are too low. Not enough pupils achieve higher standards at the end of key stage 1 or 2.

The school has the following strengths

- The newly appointed headteacher has quickly identified the priorities for improvement. He has already taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching and progress of pupils.
- Leaders are ably supported by the governing body, which also has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement.
- Parents speak highly of the new leadership and feel that the school is now moving forward in the right way. They appreciate the improved focus on pupils' outcomes and behaviour.
- Children in the early years are well taught, and the provision is well led and managed. Children in the early years make strong progress.
- Pupils love their school. They are happy, safe and well cared for. They behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are confident, articulate and welcoming towards visitors.
- The school offers a broad range of extra-curricular opportunities to enrich the curriculum. These stimulate pupils' interest in learning and help them to build confidence and the ability to take responsibilities. Pupils are physically active and value sport.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good throughout the school by:
 - ensuring that teaching is well planned and focused to build on pupils' previous learning
 - ensuring that learning tasks are well matched to the abilities of pupils and sufficiently challenging to move learning forward
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations are appropriately high, and that pupils are encouraged to sustain improvements in their work.
- Improve pupils' progress in writing so that all pupils achieve well and that greater proportions achieve the expected and higher standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2.
- Ensure that the most able pupils are appropriately challenged and make strong progress from their starting points. Improve the proportions who achieve higher standards in English and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The newly appointed headteacher has quickly identified the aspects of the school's work which require improvement. He inherited a legacy of underachievement. He has taken swift action to improve the effectiveness of teaching and improve pupils' progress and outcomes. He is ably assisted by his leadership team.
- Leaders recognise that the school has gone through a period of decline and that the quality of education has not been maintained. They are keen to bring about improvement as quickly as possible. Their actions are already having positive impact.
- Leaders and governors have worked well with parents to explain the actions being taken to improve the quality of education. Parents welcome the improvements and the approachability of the headteacher. They feel well informed. They have confidence in the new leadership and are overwhelmingly supportive. One parent said: 'Huge improvements following the change of leadership at the start of the current academic year. Mr Rivers has brought an increased focus on results and discipline.'
- Morale among parents, staff and pupils has been raised, and there is a greater sense of teamwork.
- Leaders accurately evaluate what the school does well and where it needs to improve. They monitor the quality of teaching effectively and regularly check on the progress of pupils. They support teachers well to bring about the necessary improvements through training and the feedback that leaders provide. Teachers value this and say they feel well supported and have a clear sense of direction.
- Teachers are receiving high-quality professional development opportunities. For example, they have visited other schools to observe high-quality teaching. They feel more empowered to learn from each other within the culture of improvement that leaders have created. Expectations have also been more clearly communicated so that teachers understand what to aim for and how to improve.
- While new initiatives are at an early stage of development, they are already having positive impact. For example, the use of assessment has become more accurate and is better used to inform teachers' planning and expectations. This has also enabled leaders and governors to have an accurate view of pupils' progress.
- Middle leaders are taking effective action to halt the decline in standards of reading, writing and mathematics. They have been instrumental in revising the approach to teaching these subjects. Mathematics teaching is now enabling pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding of concepts.
- The curriculum offers pupils a breadth of learning and the ability to follow their interests. For example, the First World War centenary captivated pupils' interest in Year 5. In response, the curriculum was altered so that pupils could follow their interest and deepen historical skills and knowledge. Leaders have plans to further develop the curriculum so pupils make better progress in all subjects.
- Extra-curricular activities and homework are used to enhance pupils' experiences and extend their learning. For example, pupils built some attractive models of Victorian

workhouses and Anglo-Saxon dwellings as part of home learning.

- The primary physical education (PE) and sports premium is effectively used to increase pupils' physical activity. The school provides a broad range of sporting opportunities with some professional coaching. There is a high uptake of extra-curricular sport. Pupils are very enthusiastic about all aspects of PE.
- Thought-provoking assemblies help pupils to deepen their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. For example, pupils responded reflectively to an assembly about friendship. They showed sensitivity and a deep understanding of how to be a good friend. They engage with their local community by, for example, reading to residents at the local nursing home and exhibiting and performing at the church. Pupils also reflect regularly on how well their skills as learners are developing. For example, they consider skills of perseverance and working collaboratively.
- The local authority is providing useful support to the newly established leadership team to help the school to recover.

Governance of the school

- Governors are well aware that the school has not maintained the quality of education since the last inspection. They have been challenging this unsuccessfully over a period of time, asking questions about progress and the quality of teaching. The local authority is currently supporting them to make their challenge and support more effective.
- Governors have been rigorous in their recruitment of the new headteacher.
- Governors regularly review their skills and keep their training up to date. They have appropriately evaluated their roles and procedures. They robustly monitor the school's work and the progress of improvement initiatives. They use their visits to check on the impact of the initiatives and hold leaders to account.
- Governors are knowledgeable and well informed. They ask precise questions and offer well-focused challenge and support. They have a clear understanding of their role and are ambitious in supporting leaders to bring about rapid improvement.
- Governors maintain a clear overview of the school's safeguarding procedures and ensure that pupils are well cared for. They regularly review these procedures.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that all staff are carefully vetted before they are appointed. Leaders have been appropriately trained in safe recruitment. Records of recruitment checks are well maintained and meet statutory requirements.
- There are three designated safeguarding leads (DSL), all of whom are fully trained. They have ensured that all staff are equally well trained. Staff understand their responsibilities and the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe. They know how to refer concerns if they notice changes in a pupil's mood or behaviour which may indicate a risk of harm. The culture of safeguarding is well established.

- The DSL team responds promptly to referrals made by staff or other agencies. It maintains thorough and detailed records so that concerns can be followed up efficiently. The school works well with external agencies to provide appropriate support to vulnerable pupils and their families, where this is required.
- The DSL team regularly reviews the well-being of pupils who cause it concern. It routinely monitors the effectiveness of the support provided.
- Governors are vigilant in maintaining oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements. They have been suitably trained and understand their responsibilities in ensuring the welfare and safety of every pupil. They regularly review the school's policies and procedures in this regard.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- While there is some very effective teaching, the quality of teaching overall varies too much. Teaching does not always build on pupils' previous learning well enough. Pupils do not consistently acquire or use skills and knowledge to make the progress they should. This is particularly the case in the teaching of writing.
- The purpose of teaching activities and learning tasks is often not clear enough to develop pupils' knowledge and skills. Teachers are not always precise about what they want pupils to achieve within a lesson. Consequently, pupils are not clear about how to do well in a task or about what they need to do to improve. This lack of clarity means that learning does not move forward quickly enough.
- Most-able pupils are not challenged sufficiently to make good progress from their starting points. They do not achieve as well as they should. Not enough pupils achieve higher standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2. Teachers' expectations of these pupils are too low.
- Tasks are not always well matched to pupils' abilities. Some are too easy to move learning forward. Tasks are also often too short to extend and deepen pupils' understanding and application of skills.
- Weaker teaching allows errors to persist for too long. For example, teachers do not enable pupils to improve their use of punctuation at an age-appropriate level quickly enough. Where pupils have made improvements to pieces of work, the skills they have learned are not maintained in later tasks. Pupils' work is sometimes quite untidy and disorganised. A new approach to handwriting has been introduced and is starting to improve pupils' presentation skills.
- Where teaching is more effective, teachers have well-developed subject knowledge. They use this well to enhance pupils' use of technical vocabulary. Teachers ask probing questions which enable pupils to develop and explain their thinking. Teachers are clear about the aspects of learning they are seeking to develop.
- Pupils generally enjoy reading and the school is promoting reading effectively in all key stages. Leaders have provided a larger range of books and teachers have created a culture of reading. This has started to have a positive impact on pupils' ability to interpret what they read. However, pupils' comprehension skills are not yet consistently well developed.

- Phonics is well taught in key stage 1. Pupils successfully learn to use sounds to help them read unfamiliar words and spell with greater accuracy.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Teaching assistants are mostly well deployed and support lower-attaining pupils effectively. In some lessons they are not as effectively deployed.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say they love their school. They are happy and feel safe. Pupils comment that 'everyone gets along together' and 'we are all really good friends and look after each other.'
- Pupils have opportunities to take on responsibilities such as looking after the school garden, feeding the animals and joining the school council. They take these responsibilities seriously and take pride in what they do. The school council has influenced decisions about the organisation and supervision of playtimes. It took the initiative to read to residents at a local nursing home before Christmas. This helped to raise a large amount of money towards dictionaries and thesauri for the school. Such activities are helping pupils to adopt their role as citizens both at school and in the wider community.
- Pupils responded very positively to the poppy appeal at the First World War centenary. All did a lot of work building poppy displays for the local church. These made a big impression on the local community when they were displayed. As a result of this work, pupils in Years 5 and 6 became very engaged in this period of history.
- Pupils show respect for each other's points of view and listen well. They are confident and articulate when speaking and sharing ideas publicly.
- Pupils greatly enjoy and value their physical education. They describe it as 'amazing'. A variety of games and sports skills are taught. Pupils also value the range of extra-curricular sporting activities, which helps them to stay healthy and fit. The variety of extra-curricular clubs enables pupils to participate in the wider life of the school community. Some pupils are less aware of the importance of making healthy snack choices at breaktimes.
- Pupils say they are generally free from bullying. Some say it used to be a problem but not anymore. When they do express a concern about bullying, adults are quick to sort it out. However, according to pupils, one or two adults do not respond as well. Nevertheless, they feel safe at school.
- Pupils are very aware of how to stay safe online. Assemblies about online safety and cyber-bullying have taught pupils effectively about risks and how to avoid them. Pupils also have a well-developed awareness of how to stay safe from strangers and on the roads. A workshop provided by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has introduced pupils to the availability of Childline.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well during lessons and also when they play together at break and lunchtimes. They are committed to learning and well motivated. They work well together and enjoy positive relationships. They play together enthusiastically and sociably. Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong.
- Pupils are polite and welcoming towards visitors. They are enthusiastic, confident and articulate when talking about their school.
- Pupils feel that behaviour has greatly improved since the arrival of their new headteacher. This is echoed by parents' comments, which say there has been a marked improvement in behaviour. A large majority of parents feel that pupils are safe and well behaved. Pupils value the new behaviour policy and understand the stepped approach to improving behaviour, where necessary. They say this helps them. One pupil said: 'We are getting told off less now than we used to.' Another said: 'If we get too noisy, teachers use signals to stop.'
- Attendance has improved significantly and is currently above the national average. Persistent absence has also reduced, though a minority of pupils are still affected by absence, mainly due to ill health.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes at key stage 2 have declined significantly over the last three years. In 2018 pupils' attainment in English and mathematics fell 25% below the national average. Progress in writing was well below the national average. Attainment at key stage 1 was in line with national averages, but the number of pupils achieving greater depth was below.
- Leaders have introduced more effective approaches to using assessment and tracking pupils' progress. Teachers have a better understanding of the progress pupils need to make from their starting points. Initiatives to improve the quality of teaching are helping to advance learning. Higher proportions of pupils are currently on track to reach national expectations at the end of key stage 2 in 2019 than in 2018.
- Where teaching is strongest, pupils make good progress, but the quality of pupils' learning varies widely across the school. Not enough pupils are currently making good progress in English, mathematics and other subjects.
- While improvements have been made to the teaching of writing, pupils' rates of progress are not yet strong enough. Teachers' expectations are often too low, and the quality and quantity of pupils' writing vary widely between classes. Tasks are often too short to enable pupils to develop the skills they need to become successful writers. The development of writing across other subjects is also variable.
- In mathematics, sequences of learning are appropriately planned, and progress is better than in English. New initiatives in the teaching of mathematics are improving rates of progress. Pupils have opportunities to consolidate their understanding of concepts and use these to solve problems and reason mathematically. Their fluency in

using number facts and calculations is improving.

- High-attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged and do not make the progress they should. Too few deepen their learning in English and mathematics and so do not achieve the higher standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2.
- Low-attaining pupils and those with SEND are well supported, and their progress is often good. The progress of disadvantaged pupils varies between year groups.
- The wider curriculum, beyond English and mathematics, is taught in interesting and engaging ways. However, leaders acknowledge that there is more to do to ensure that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding progress well in all subjects.
- Pupils learn phonic skills well. They quickly develop skills in blending and segmenting sounds to help them read unfamiliar words and spell more accurately. In 2018 the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check was above the national average. Current pupils in Year 1 are making equally strong progress towards this measure.

Early years provision

Good

- Children are well taught in Reception. They quickly develop confidence and improve their speaking skills. Children's social and communication skills are developed well so they can work collaboratively and learn from each other. Adults support activities well, using questioning effectively to develop pupils' learning, play and use of vocabulary.
- Phonics is well taught in Reception and children enthusiastically develop reading skills. Writing is also well taught in both adult-led and child-initiated activities. Children have moved from mark-making to writing that can be easily read. The most able pupils can write simple sentences that express ideas. For example, one child was able to write about penguins diving into water and catching fish.
- Children are also achieving well in mathematics. Their counting and addition skills are progressing well. Many pupils have already developed the skill of counting on from a number in order to calculate simple additions.
- Good use is made of assessment to plan next steps in learning. Children make good progress as a result. In 2018 the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was above the national average. This has been a consistent trend over the last three years.
- Pupils are well behaved and highly engaged in their activities. They enjoy good relationships with each other and with adults.
- The provision is well organised. Resources and equipment are well presented in an attractive and safe environment. This allows children to operate confidently and independently.
- The early years are well led and managed by a knowledgeable teacher. She works well with other schools to develop the provision. She has a good understanding of the strengths of the department and is keen to continuously improve it. Parents are positively engaged in their children's learning and contribute to assessments of what they can do.

- Transitions into school from home and pre-school settings are well managed. The early years leader gets to know the children well before they join the school.

School details

Unique reference number	118289
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10084361

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Randall
Headteacher	Mark Rivers
Telephone number	01622 726364
Website	www.east-farleigh.kent.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@east-farleigh.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 March 2015

Information about this school

- The school has gone through a period of transition. The former headteacher retired in May 2018. The school was led by an acting headteacher until the new headteacher joined the school in September 2018.
- The local authority has brokered support from another local primary school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with parents on the playground at the end of the first day of the inspection.
- Inspectors considered 101 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire, including 100 free text comments.
- The single central record of recruitment checks, the school’s safeguarding policies and procedures and several case studies were scrutinised.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning jointly with school leaders in all classes.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at their work across all subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, representatives of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with one of the designated safeguarding leaders and reviewed her records and case files.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff about their work. They also considered 12 responses to Ofsted’s staff survey.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and also gathered their views through many informal conversations.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Documents related to the work of the governing body were reviewed, including minutes of their meetings.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including: leaders’ evaluations of the school’s effectiveness; development plans; the school’s own information about pupils’ progress and attainment; and behaviour and attendance logs.

Inspection team

Peter Wibroe, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Clementina Aina

Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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