

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



7 March 2019

Miss Jen Mayhew
Headteacher
Pembury School
Lower Green Road
Pembury
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
TN2 4EB

Dear Miss Mayhew

Short inspection of Pembury School

Following my visit to the school on 26 February 2019, 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 February 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You know your school well. You have committed yourself to improving the quality of education in the school, and pupils are now making improved progress in English and mathematics. You are honest and realistic about your school's strengths and areas for development and have planned meticulously to bring about change. You have been responsive to the local authority's advice and have made good use of the partnership projects in place with other schools in the area. You are supported by hardworking, caring staff and active, knowledgeable governors.

Pupils enjoy school. They particularly appreciate mathematics and the creative curriculum. They relish the wealth of clubs available, before school, at lunchtime and after school. If pupils have an interest and want to run a lunchtime club they know staff will encourage them to start one themselves. Pupils appreciate the visits they make and look forward to the residential trips. They are excited by the learning they experience as forest explorers. They are proud to be members of the school council, take their responsibilities seriously and know their actions contribute to the school and the community.

Many parents are very happy with the school, particularly the way their children are looked after and the emotional support they receive from caring staff. However, some parents perceive that behaviour is not as good as it could be and think that the leadership could manage behaviour better. During the inspection pupils'

behaviour was good. They concentrated on their learning and paid attention to the teacher. There were no incidents in the playground; pupils played cooperatively and said it was easy to make friends. Leaders keep robust records regarding their management of pupils' behaviour. The reasons for decisions are clearly documented, particularly for exclusions. You have trained your staff in behaviour management and a range of strategies have been put in place, for example golden tickets for good behaviour.

You have empowered senior and middle leaders to work together to bring about change. Their enthusiasm and growing skills in coaching other staff have resulted in new approaches in several areas of the curriculum. The mathematics leader has successfully led the introduction of a new approach to the teaching of mathematics throughout the school. Pupils' progress in mathematics is improving. However, the most able pupils often find mathematics too easy and say they frequently complete all the tasks as they do not have appropriate stretch and challenge.

Work in pupils' topic books shows an inconsistency in teachers' expectations for learning. In the best work seen, pupils were able to draw conclusions from source materials. In other books, work only required the simple recall of facts. Leaders now need to ensure that a greater focus on what pupils are learning is in place, rather than the activities they are doing, especially in the creative curriculum.

At the last inspection leaders were asked to improve the teaching of spelling. The English leaders have introduced a range of strategies to help pupils learn their spellings. Refresher training has strengthened the teaching of phonics, which has improved spelling in key stage 1. Personalised spelling programmes for older pupils have been effective. Pupils like taking responsibility for their spelling and they enjoy testing each other. Parents and pupils all recognise that spelling in pupils' books has improved as a consequence.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a strength of the school. Systems, policies and procedures are securely in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe. The school's finance assistant ensures that the single central record of recruitment checks on all adults who work in the school is carefully maintained. There are detailed records of the staff's safeguarding training and the school's risk assessments. Governors fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities conscientiously and make sure checks have been carried out. You keep meticulous records regarding your work with agencies such as social services, ensuring that the help given by outside agencies is timely. Several parents and pupils said your family liaison officer had given them much-appreciated support in a time of need. She has been instrumental in providing help for young carers in the school.

Pupils are very aware of the need to keep themselves safe online. Staff ensure that e-safety is a priority through frequent lessons, internet safety week, posters, assemblies, regular reminders and activities like the popular quizzes. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe, proud to be cyber ambassadors

and are swift to report any online issues to staff. A wealth of advice for parents is available on the school website.

Attendance is above national average. The small number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced due to careful monitoring of attendance by you and office staff. Your rewards for good attendance are effective and your personal contact with some parents has helped their children attend more regularly.

Pupils, parents and staff say the school is a safe place. Pupils trust staff and say there is always someone they can talk to if they have any worries. Although parents and pupils acknowledge there have been some incidents of bullying in the past, pupils feel staff have resolved these. Pupils take their roles as anti-bullying ambassadors seriously. They give support and advice to other pupils in the playground before small incidents escalate into something bigger.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that the inspection would focus on: safeguarding; pupils' progress in mathematics; the effectiveness of the support provided for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); and how well the creative curriculum provides pupils with knowledge, skills and understanding across all subjects.
- The mathematics leader has made good use of the training he has received. He has shared his learning with staff, making sure that teachers have good subject knowledge. Pupils are making increasingly better progress in mathematics since the introduction of a whole-school approach to learning in mathematics. The use of clear information for pupils about what they are learning and how they can show success has improved pupils' understanding of mathematics. This has also enabled staff to give pupils precise help in making the next steps in their learning.
- Pupils say that mathematics is a much better learning experience than it was in the past. They particularly enjoy the challenges presented by problem-solving and reasoning. Older pupils self-assess their work and recognise when they need additional help from the teacher. They say that teachers are always willing to explain things again if they need it.
- Several parents praised the care and help for pupils with SEND. The special educational needs coordinator is new to her post. She is committed to improving the progress of pupils and monitors their learning individually. Pupils have clear provision plans and there is a wide range of additional help with learning. The intervention programme for mathematics is a success and several pupils are making accelerated progress. Those pupils who make good progress over time are removed from the special educational needs register, going on to make progress in line with other pupils.
- The support for disadvantaged pupils has ensured that they make the same progress as other pupils. Funding for these pupils has been effectively used to support learning, ensuring that they have the same opportunities as everyone else.

- The new curriculum development team have made a good start to revising the creative curriculum. They are systematically reviewing the content. Teachers have made sure that it covers the national curriculum for all subjects. Some topics have been successfully changed so that they relate more closely to pupils' interests.
- Pupils really enjoy the creative curriculum. They appreciate the special days and the curriculum events, such as the healthy week taking place during the inspection. They find the activities exciting; for example, during the inspection pupils were making smoothies using a bicycle-powered liquidiser.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to build good relationships with parents
- the most able are always appropriately challenged in mathematics
- there is greater focus on what pupils learn in the creative curriculum.

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

Lesley Corbett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other leaders, four governors and a group of pupils. I telephoned a representative of the local authority. I visited all the classes in the school with you to observe teaching and learning. I considered 38 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, and took account of 103 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 41 free-text comments. I analysed a range of the school's documents, including: leaders' self-evaluation and improvement planning; minutes of the governing body's meetings; and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.