

7 June 2019

Ms Sara Dangerfield
Headteacher
Peaslake Free School
Colmans Hill
Peaslake
Guildford
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Dear Ms Dangerfield

Short inspection of Peaslake Free School

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 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 June 2015.

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.

The headteacher has successfully led significant improvements to the quality of education at the school since the last inspection. Pupils flourish in the stimulating learning environment both within the school and beyond. Pupils demonstrate an innate curiosity about the world, which is nurtured very well through a breadth of rich learning opportunities. For example, pupils develop very strong knowledge about the natural world that surrounds the school. Additionally, pupils make strong progress in the development of their reading, writing and mathematics skills, knowledge and understanding.

You have established a highly effective and intellectually stimulating curriculum. Pupils were enthusiastic when speaking with inspector about the range of their learning. Parents are unanimously positive about the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum. This was evident in the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, describing the school's 'really wonderful learning environment' and the 'utterly amazing staff'. One parent's comment, echoed by many others, stated, 'The level of education and the new experiences... are the best

I have ever known’.

Governance is very strong at Peaslake Free School. Governors bring a range of helpful expertise to their roles, enabling them to provide both challenge and support effectively and in equal measure. Through visits to the school, meetings with staff and discussions with pupils, governors gather pertinent information to hold leaders to account and celebrate the achievements of the school.

Pupils behave exceptionally well both in class and beyond. They are attentive, conscientious and intellectually curious. Through the curriculum, for example, pupils develop empathy for others by exploring the feelings of characters in stories. Pupils are kind and support each other in their learning.

You correctly identify reading and writing as a strength in the school. Across all year groups, pupils read and write very well. Consequently in 2018, pupils attained significantly above the national average in reading and writing. Pupils’ enjoyment of reading is replicated in the creation of their own books which demonstrate excellent understanding of the structure and language employed in books.

Where improvement is required, you and your leadership team take swift and well-informed action. The previous inspection report noted the importance of improving the achievements of pupils, particularly the most able pupils. Consequently, your focus on improving pupils’ achievements in mathematics resulted in attainment that was above the national average at both the expected and higher standard in 2018. Additionally, you took swift action to increase the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. You remain ambitious to achieve further improvement, for example by developing opportunities within the curriculum to extend pupils’ subject-specific vocabulary.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, are diligent in ensuring that pupils are both physically and emotionally safe. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Risk assessments are carefully considered to ensure that pupils are kept safe both in school and beyond. Staff have up-to-date safeguarding training, enabling them to act swiftly and appropriately on any safeguarding concerns. Leaders’ checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are recorded appropriately and securely. The designated safeguarding leads have established a very strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Pupils spoke positively about how staff care for their well-being. Responding to Ofsted’s online survey, parents unanimously agreed that children are safe at the school.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn about the potential dangers of the internet and how to keep safe online. Leaders have established a curriculum that promotes physical and emotional well-being. Pupils have a breadth of opportunities to keep physically active through specialist physical education and outdoor activity. Pupils also develop strong social skills through the curriculum. As a result, pupils at Peaslake Free School are successful, confident and happy learners.

Inspection findings

- This inspection's first line of enquiry focused on how well leaders ensure that the most able pupils consistently achieve at greater depth across the curriculum. Leaders have successfully established relevant, highly-targeted challenge throughout the curriculum. Through the provision of a well-structured curriculum, pupils develop strong skills, knowledge and understanding complemented by a breadth of opportunities to extend their learning appropriately. For example, I observed Year 2 pupils independently sourcing information about insightful questions that they had posed about the sky from books and the internet. Pupils synthesised this information and wrote extensive and impressively articulated information texts as a result.
- Teachers successfully engage pupils in their learning, motivating their success. For example, after exploring a scientific understanding of natural changes, pupils were eager to show me the changes in ferns as they grow, creatures that live beneath the bark of dead trees and the life cycle of cow parsley. The most able pupils successfully draw on such prior knowledge to articulate a more complex understanding of the world.
- Additionally, the most able pupils of all year groups develop very strong reasoning skills by evaluating the methods that they have selected to solve mathematical problems. Pupils also write at length, using language and sentence structures effectively. As a result, the most able pupils make rapid progress across the curriculum.
- The second key line of enquiry focused on how well leaders have established a broad and balanced curriculum that both engages pupils and deepens pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. In music, for example, specialist teaching helps pupils to develop strong musical skills. I observed pupils developing an impressive understanding of how to sing accurately alongside rhythmic musical patterns.
- Alongside the well-constructed curriculum, leaders have developed an effective assessment system that enables them to evaluate effectively its impact on pupils' learning. As a result, pupils receive helpful feedback in line with the school's feedback policy. As a result, pupils extend their knowledge and understanding of a breadth of subjects successfully.
- Through well-planned sequences of lessons, pupils deepen their knowledge about a range of subjects. For example, pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 visited a synagogue to enrich their understanding of Judaism. Consequently, pupils wrote informed descriptions of Jewish religious practices. Through their learning in and about the natural world, pupils have excellent opportunities to explore their scientific, mathematical, linguistic, musical and artistic knowledge, skills and understanding. For example, I observed pupils creating sculptures using natural materials drawing on their knowledge of the artist, Andy Goldsworthy. I also observed children in Reception creating birds' nests for robins and blue tits using their understanding of the biological needs of birds. However, pupils do not always have the correct subject-specific vocabulary to articulate their understanding.

- The third key line of enquiry focused on how well the early years provision enables children to reach a good level of development. Leaders and staff have established a highly effective curriculum that enables children to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. As a result, children are well prepared for study in Year 1. Through the provision of well-constructed tasks and activities, children develop strong language and communication skills alongside reading, writing and mathematics knowledge. For example, children have a breadth of opportunities to practise their writing skills through games, art and book making. I observed children writing well-structured stories about badgers, carefully considering their word and sentence choices. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is consistently above the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of subject-specific vocabulary is further strengthened to enable all pupils to articulate their understanding of subjects across the 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 Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Aykin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

For this inspection, I had meetings with you and middle leaders. I also met with three governors. I spoke with pupils informally in classrooms and when walking around the school's site. I also met formally with a group of eight pupils to gather their views about the school. I visited a range of lessons to look at pupils' learning across all phases and carried out a separate scrutiny of pupils' work.

Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined along with the record of recruitment checks carried out on all adults working at the school. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans; information relating to pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour; the minutes of the governing body's meetings; and curriculum plans. I considered the views of 19 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the views of seven members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff survey.