

Tree Tops Primary Academy

Brishing Lane, Park Wood, Maidstone, Kent ME15 9EZ

Inspection dates

11–12 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal leads a committed team with one vision for the school. Senior leaders are uncompromising in their work to improve the quality of education that the school provides.
- Middle leaders are knowledgeable and understand their roles well. The impact of their work is clear to see and directly linked to the improvement in pupils' outcomes over time.
- Support from Leigh Academies Trust is of a high quality. Because of this, the school has made rapid progress since the last inspection.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and improving. Consequently, most pupils are making good or better progress.
- Staff work hard to ensure that pupils' social and emotional development is given a high priority. The pastoral care of pupils is a strong element of the school's provision.
- Pupils enjoy coming to Tree Tops. They show good attitudes to school because staff make learning fun, most of the time.
- The very large majority of parents who spoke to inspectors were extremely positive about the school. All said it has improved significantly over the last two years.
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do increasingly well. Their outcomes are improving rapidly.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years, which is well led and managed.
- Provision for pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils' behaviour has improved dramatically. As a result, poor behaviour rarely impacts on learning.
- Safeguarding is effective. Systems to protect pupils from harm are well developed. Staff are proactive when they have concerns about the welfare of pupils.
- Attendance has improved since the last inspection. However, there is still more to be done to reduce persistent absence.
- Pupils' outcomes are improving year on year. Despite this, the proportion of pupils achieving a greater depth of learning could be higher.
- Leaders have successfully reviewed and made changes to the curriculum. They know that more needs to be done to ensure that the changes that they have made become fully effective.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rates of progress that the most able make across the school, so that higher proportions of pupils achieve a greater depth of learning in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Reduce rates of pupils' absence, particularly persistent absence, so that attendance improves to match that of other primary schools more closely.
- Further develop and embed the recent changes made to the curriculum so that:
 - leaders have a clear overview of the learning journeys that pupils will make as they move through the school
 - staff are fully confident in delivering all aspects of the curriculum, so that they can build successfully on what pupils have learned before
 - pupils make stronger links with their prior learning, to develop their knowledge and understanding and to be even better prepared for their next steps in education.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The principal leads a dedicated team of staff with passion and great commitment. Under her leadership, the school has improved rapidly. As a result, pupils now benefit from a good quality of education at Tree Tops Primary Academy.
- Leaders at all levels are highly aspirational. Self-evaluation of the school's strengths and areas to develop is accurate. Improvement planning is effective and focuses on the right things.
- Middle leaders are able and very keen to make an impact on improving all aspects of the school. They understand their individual roles well. Their contribution to enhancing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been significant.
- Provision for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and pupils with SEND is good. Leaders use funding wisely to ensure that pupils from vulnerable groups are supported well.
- The curriculum is evolving. Leaders have been courageous, making significant changes at a time when the school may have been vulnerable. Although there is more to do to embed and further develop the successful changes to date, it is clear to see that pupils are now benefiting from a curriculum that has more breadth and is meeting their needs increasingly well.
- The school's extra-curricular offer has also been developed in the last year. Pupils enjoy an increasing number of educational visits to support their learning. Visits to local or national museums are now the norm. A recent visit to Parliament by Year 3 is a good example of leaders' work to broaden the educational experiences of pupils, the majority of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. The wider curriculum, special events and assemblies help with this. Pupils understand about similarities and differences. They are increasingly aware of different cultures and faiths. Discussion and debate about right and wrong, and the impact that plastics are having on our environment for instance, are part of everyday life within the school.
- The support of Leigh Academies Trust has played an important part in the school's rapid improvement. Improvement directors support the school extremely well. The chief executive officer and academies director have also played a significant role in accelerating the progress that the school has made, motivating leaders and staff to be uncompromising about the quality of their work.

Governance of the school

- Governance of the school is a strength. Communication between the Leigh Academies Trust board, the Maidstone primary academies board, and the school's own development group is strong. As a result, key information flows freely, and board and development group members are well informed about the performance of the school.
- Those in positions of governance know that their role is strategic in nature. However, board and development group members make it their business to know the school well

at an operational level. As a result, they are well equipped to hold leaders to account. Equally important, they are also well aware of the immense pressures put on leaders to improve pupils' outcomes. Consequently, they are sensitive and supportive of leaders in their work to ensure that the school continues to improve over time.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff know pupils well and know what to do if they have concerns. Systems to ensure that pupils are safe are well developed. Importantly, the culture to keep children safe is strong, because staff are vigilant and fully understand their responsibilities where the protection of children is concerned.
- Processes to recruit staff are sound. Appropriate checks are made on all adults coming into contact with children at the school. Staff training is up to date. Site security and routines at the start and finish of each school day are managed well.
- All parents who completed Ofsted's online parent questionnaire think that their children feel safe in school. Parents who spoke to inspectors talked about the high levels of pastoral care that their children receive. When asked, all thought that the school was a safe place for their children to be.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teachers know pupils well. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and engagement in learning. Consequently, lessons are purposeful, and the majority of pupils make good or better progress.
- Classrooms are happy places where pupils enjoy learning about new things. Relationships are strong between staff and pupils. One pupil told the lead inspector that, 'Teachers make learning fun, mostly', to the delight of the rest of the class and the staff that were present.
- The teaching of phonics is having a positive impact on developing pupils' reading skills. This is reflected in the school's improving test and assessment results. Importantly, pupils enjoy reading. One told an inspector that they enjoyed learning new words in 'magical stories'. Another was able to talk with enthusiasm about the sub-plots and character traits from a book he had recently finished.
- Support for pupils with SEND is good. The special educational needs coordinator and the pastoral and learning support manager are both relatively new to their roles. Despite this, they have already reviewed the quality of provision and made changes where required. As a result, support for pupils in this vulnerable group has improved, both in and out of the classroom.
- Support staff are effective in their roles, although, on occasion, some are still more concerned with ensuring that pupils behave and comply with the tasks that they have been set, rather than supporting their learning.
- During classroom visits, most pupils were happy to explain to inspectors what they were learning and why. However, on occasion, some pupils found it hard to make links between the work they were tackling and previous learning. Leaders acknowledge this

and have made changes to the way that the curriculum is structured and delivered to help pupils make the connections between what they already know, and new knowledge as it is taught.

- Because expectations are higher, and the quality of teaching has improved, proportions of pupils achieving at age-related levels in reading, writing and mathematics across all year groups have improved dramatically in the last three years. However, teachers' expectations need to be higher still if more pupils are to achieve a greater depth in their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils understand that they come to school to learn. Older pupils display a great sense of 'self-belief', because staff understand the importance of building pupils' self-esteem by providing successful learning opportunities, without lowering expectations.
- Classroom visits showed inspectors that pupils are taking an increasing pride in their work. Again, this is particularly the case with older pupils, who are focused and aspire to achieve well in all that they do.
- Most pupils talk confidently about their learning. Although some were less sure about the purpose of the tasks that they had been set when asked, all were keen to share their work with inspectors, and were positive about the progress that they are making.
- The school's curriculum ensures that pupils learn about staying safe in a range of contexts. This includes when using the internet.
- Pupils told inspectors that bullying has been eradicated in the school. Pupils talked about bullying being a problem in the past, but that staff had ensured that this was no longer a problem for them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This includes in classrooms and as pupils move around the school. Playtimes are lively, but pupils conduct themselves well and stick to the rules, although occasionally need a prompt from staff do so.
- Pupils are very clear that behaviour has greatly improved in recent times. They put this down to the new rules introduced since the current principal arrived. One pupil shared that, 'Everyone loves her positiveness and that she sorts it all out in a calm way. She never raises her voice. She is always calm and puts us first.'
- Attendance is improving because leaders are taking effective action to reduce absence. This is particularly the case with persistent absence, which, while still too high, has reduced significantly over time. This is especially the case for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, where rates of persistent absence have been halved in the last year.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils are now making good or better progress in a range of subjects across the school. This is directly linked to leaders' drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning. As result, outcomes are now good in all phases of the school.
- Leaders track the progress and attainment of pupils well. They have a clear understanding of where pupils are achieving well, and where more needs to be done. Consequently, pupils in danger of falling behind are identified quickly.
- Pupils make good progress with their phonics skills in early years and key stage 1. Although the headline figure of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics screening dipped slightly in 2018, leaders have taken effective action to rectify this.
- Current pupils are making better progress than they did in the past. This picture builds on the school's profile of an improving trend over time in progress and attainment measures in tests and assessments at the end of key stages 1 and 2.
- Progress in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2018 was in the average range compared to other primary schools nationally. Progress in writing in the same period was well above average. This was true of the progress of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds in the same subjects.
- Higher proportions of pupils than previously are achieving at age-related expectations across all year groups in the school. This includes at the end of Years 2 and 6. However, proportions of pupils achieving a greater depth of learning are not yet as strong.

Early years provision

Good

- Children get off to a good start in the early years. This includes in Nursery, where the quality of provision is equally strong.
- The early years is well led and managed. The early years leader has a clear understanding of the provision's strengths and the areas that need to be developed.
- Staff have high expectations and respond well to the needs of individual children. As a result, most children make good or better progress from their different starting points.
- The curriculum is well designed and planned across the setting. Staff work hard to provide children with learning opportunities that they might not have outside of school. Children enjoy the opportunities to learn that the classroom and outside learning environment present.
- Children are friendly and behave well in early years because staff have high expectations and routines are well established.
- Children from disadvantaged backgrounds do equally well in the early years as they do across the rest of the school.
- Parents are very positive about the early years. Parents who spoke to inspectors feel that their children are safe and cared for well and make good progress with their reading and writing, for instance.

School details

Unique reference number	137882
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10058258

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	276
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Robert Findlay
Principal	Miss Denise White
Telephone number	01622 754 888
Website	www.treetopsprimaryacademy.org
Email address	contactus@treetopsprimaryacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 May 2017

Information about this school

- Tree Tops Primary Academy is an average-sized primary school. The school is a sponsored academy and is part of the Leigh Academies Trust. The school is governed by an academies board which has delegated responsibilities from the trust. The school also has a development group, which works closely with the academies board.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Other pupils come from a range of different ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who attract pupil premium funding is very high and well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with SEND is broadly in line with the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Classrooms were visited on both days of the inspection. During classroom visits inspectors observed teaching and learning, assessed the quality of pupils' work and talked to them about the progress that they were making. Most classroom visits were accompanied by senior leaders.
- As well as looking at pupils' work in classrooms, a separate sampling of their work was undertaken with the English and mathematics subject leads. An inspector also heard pupils read.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed in classrooms and as they moved around the school. This included at the start of the school day and at break and lunch time.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings throughout the inspection. These included meetings with senior and middle leaders, teachers, the office manager and a group of pupils.
- The lead inspector met with trust leaders and representatives of those responsible for governance, including the chief executive officer and the chairs of the academies board and the local development group.
- Inspectors talked to parents at the start of both days of the inspection.
- Inspectors took into account the seven responses to the Ofsted parent survey and accompanying free-text messages.
- A wide range of policies and records were scrutinised, including those regarding the safety of pupils. The school's self-evaluation, improvement planning and information about pupils' outcomes were considered. Minutes of the academies board and the school's development group meetings were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jonathan Shields	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Taylor	Ofsted Inspector

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