

Inspection of a good school: Gravel Hill Primary School

Watling Street, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7QJ

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 January 2022

Outcome

Gravel Hill Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school and are safe. Parents and carers typically described the school as 'welcoming.' Pupils value the friendships that they form with their peers and the strong working relationships that they build with staff.

Leaders have high expectations for all pupils. Some pupils join the school at different starting points throughout the school year. Leaders make sure that pupils have the support they need to access the curriculum and make friends. Motivational quotations painted on the walls remind pupils how important it is to be resilient in their learning. Pupils behave well in lessons and during playtime. Bullying rarely happens. If it does, leaders work to resolve issues quickly.

Leaders create leadership opportunities for pupils. The pupil governors value their role and lead assemblies on topical issues. Educational visits are linked to the curriculum. For example, a recent visit to the Florence Nightingale Museum built on the work that pupils study in history. Pupils enjoyed putting their scientific knowledge into action by planting 'seed to feed' in the school vegetable patch.

The school's 'Gravel Hill Museum' is available for all pupils to 'visit' in school. This helps pupils to see and use historical artefacts that are linked to curriculum areas. Pupils value the reading rewards that leaders provide. These encourage them to broaden their reading habits.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

All pupils study a broad and ambitious curriculum. The curriculum is well sequenced and builds on learning that begins in the early years. For example, in Reception, children learn about song and rhyme through the collection of nursery rhymes that they listen to. This helps them to build a foundation for the future study of poetry as they move into Year 1 and beyond. In the Nursery, teachers introduce children to the concept of number, using physical props and repetition to reinforce learning. Teachers build on this existing

knowledge of number in mathematics in Year 1 when they introduce pupils to concepts such as 'greater than' and 'less than'. Pupils achieve well across a range of subjects.

Subject leaders identify the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn and remember for each subject. They make sure that pupils re-visit this knowledge over time. For instance, in geography, pupils have a number of opportunities to recap key learning on the seven continents of the world. Teachers carefully select appropriate teaching resources that support pupils' learning. This approach supports all pupils, but particularly pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For example, in geography, pupils with SEND used physical and visual resources to help them to understand learning about the equator line. Leaders work well with external agencies to identify and support pupils with SEND quickly when they join the school.

Teachers use timely checks in lessons to assess whether pupils have understood new content. They use these checks to adapt and inform their teaching swiftly. For example, in science in Year 4, teachers identified pupils' misconceptions over open and closed switches in an electrical circuit. They worked quickly to rectify these. Senior leaders emphasise the teaching of subject-specific vocabulary. This clear focus on communication and language starts in the early years. Teachers prompt pupils to use subject-specific terms correctly, such as 'permeable' in science and 'hemisphere' in geography. Pupils refer to their books to remind them of key vocabulary. However, sometimes pupils need more time in lessons to embed and use subject-specific vocabulary fluently.

Leaders prioritise early reading. Teachers are skilled at teaching phonics. All staff use familiar language when teaching phonics to enable pupils to make progress quickly. Teachers check pupils' understanding of previously learned letters and sounds before moving on to teach new sounds. If any pupils need support, this is offered immediately. Books match the sounds that pupils have learned. Teachers make sure that younger pupils get opportunities to re-read familiar books at home to help to develop their fluency. Teachers work with parents to support their understanding of early reading so that they can encourage pupils at home. Teachers help pupils to develop a love of reading through introducing them to a range of diverse texts. All pupils read widely and often.

Leaders created behavioural systems that are understood by all. Routines are consistent and there is no low-level disruption. Leaders think carefully about when extra-curricular clubs are offered to encourage more pupils to attend. Leaders teach pupils about cultures that are different to their own. The flags on classroom doors celebrate the different cultural backgrounds of pupils in the school.

Leaders create helpful opportunities for subject teachers to work together across the trust. Leaders listen to staff. Staff appreciate the strategies that leaders put in place to consider their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a culture of safeguarding where pupils and their families can talk openly to staff if they have any worries or concerns. Leaders are aware of the local safeguarding challenges, for example the risks associated with travel and traffic. They teach pupils how to manage these risks safely.

Teachers have received up-to-date safeguarding training and they know how to keep children safe. Leaders work effectively with external agencies, following up concerns where needed.

Pupils receive timely safeguarding advice from external agencies, including the police, about online safety. Through the curriculum, leaders seek to educate pupils about issues such as consent in an age-appropriate way.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, pupils do not have enough opportunities to embed subject-specific vocabulary in lessons. When this happens, it can limit their understanding of key knowledge and concepts. Leaders should continue their work to consolidate and embed subject-specific vocabulary across the curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Gravel Hill Primary, to be good in June 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	145208
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	10212307
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	424
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Bola Ojo
Headteacher	Melanie Neale
Website	www.gravelhillschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school has a part-time Nursery provision with 26 places.
- The school converted to become an academy in November 2017. The school is part of the Unity Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the chief executive officer of Unity Academy Trust, and governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspector completed deep dives in these subjects: reading, geography and science. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited

a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The inspector visited art and design, history and mathematics lessons.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' priorities for school improvement.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime.
- The inspector looked at the effectiveness of the school's work on safeguarding by reviewing the record of pre-employment checks for staff, speaking to staff, governors and pupils and meeting with the safeguarding team.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The inspector also considered the responses to the online staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Lucy Bruce, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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