

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



23 February 2018

Mr Alex Candler
Headteacher
Lexden Primary School with Unit for Hearing Impaired Pupils
Trafalgar Road
Colchester
Essex
CO3 9AS

Dear Mr Candler

Short inspection of Lexden Primary School with Unit for Hearing Impaired Pupils

Following my visit to the school on 8 February 2018, 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection and successfully addressed the areas for improvement that were identified. The school has experienced a number of significant changes to the senior leadership team in recent years. Since taking on the role of headteacher in 2016, you have ensured that the care and the highly inclusive approach that were highlighted at the previous inspection have remained strengths of the school. One parent expressed the sentiments of many: 'The school has a warm, welcoming feel from office staff, teaching staff, headteacher and children alike. It promotes a feeling of pride and community.'

You are ably supported by your deputy headteachers and the head of the hearing impaired unit. Your dedication and unswerving resolve to ensure that pupils at Lexden Primary School make the best possible progress is very evident. As a new leadership team, you have set suitably high expectations of staff and pupils. You provide good-quality training for staff so that they are becoming increasingly skilled. Consequently, pupils currently on roll are making better progress, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.

You have an accurate view of the strengths and weakness of the school and have ensured that your leadership team have clear roles and responsibilities to improve the achievement of pupils even further. Leaders carefully and regularly monitor the progress different groups of pupils make, particularly those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Pupils who have

SEN and/or disabilities, including those who have an education, health and care plan in the hearing impaired unit, are provided with the same opportunities to learn and achieve well. Consequently, these pupils make good progress, personally and academically.

You have experienced a high turnover of staff since the previous inspection. However, you have established a more stable staff team that is supported and challenged appropriately. All staff who responded to their questionnaire are proud to work at the school and appreciate how well leaders listen to and consider their views when making decisions and changes to educational practice.

Governors, under the guidance of the recently appointed chair of governors, have an accurate view of what is working well and what could be even better. They have specific roles and responsibilities and are dedicated to their work. They have a strong focus on pupils making the best personal and academic progress.

Pupils have a positive attitude to their learning and the strengths mentioned in the previous inspection remain the case. The relationship between pupils and staff is positive, encouraging and highly conducive to learning. Pupils told me how much they enjoy their lessons. In particular, older pupils are very proud of the library and the fact that they have been closely involved in choosing the wide range of books. One pupil explained that he had chosen his book 'because I have read another one from this author before. I really like his books and we have them all in our library.'

Pupils are polite and welcoming. One parent wrote, 'You can tell which children have attended Lexden as they are always the most polite, caring children and this is down to the school's ethos.' Pupils attend school well and overall attendance has been in line with the national average consistently since the previous inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, place the highest priority on keeping pupils safe and providing strong pastoral care. Leaders have been successful in creating a secure and caring environment in which pupils and staff have confidence and feel valued. Parents and carers overwhelmingly agreed that their children are kept safe and are well cared for.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Recording systems are fully in place for the recruitment of staff and school records are meticulously kept. Staff receive regular child protection training, both formally and through frequent updates. As a result, they are suitably qualified and confident to carry out their duties and be vigilant.

Pupils are provided with a wide range of opportunities and strategies so they can learn how to keep themselves safe, especially when using online technology.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to establish how well pupils achieve in reading. This was because, in 2017 in key stage 2, the progress pupils made in reading from their starting points was lower than that found nationally. Pupils' achievement in reading was also much lower than in 2016. I wanted to determine how well leaders are ensuring that pupils make consistently good progress and how effectively pupils are taught their reading skills.
- You have a clear rationale for, and place a high priority on, the teaching of reading. Evidence from pupils' books demonstrates that adults consistently and successfully apply the school's teaching approaches to reading lessons across key stage 2. The English leader carefully monitors the quality of teaching so that pupils make the best progress. Teachers plan and use a range of good quality texts to ensure that pupils develop both their decoding and comprehension skills. The effect of your new approach is accelerating the progress most pupils make. This was seen in your in-school information and the books we examined. We found that the most able pupils are not provided with opportunities to extend and develop their reading skills even further, so that more could reach the higher standard by the end of Year 6.
- In 2016, you revised the way that you teach phonics because the proportion of pupils reaching the required standard by the end of Year 1 was low. You now have a highly systematic approach and carefully structure how pupils are taught so that teaching meets their needs well. Adults are suitably trained and ensure that pupils have the opportunity to practise their reading and writing skills during their phonics lessons. In 2017, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check rose by 11%. School records show that this improved standard is set to continue.
- For pupils in the hearing impaired unit, their individual needs are precisely met. Adults ensure that they provide a language rich environment so that pupils build their vocabulary and reading skills. Recently, pupils enjoyed reading and working through a well-known Roald Dahl book. The sequence of lessons was effectively planned so that pupils read effectively at their pace. The work they produced over time demonstrated the good progress each pupil made and the pride they had in their learning.
- The improvements in the quality of teaching in reading is also having a positive effect on the progress pupils make in writing. Pupils' books demonstrate that they take care with spelling and their handwriting. Most pupils work diligently and respond well to the higher expectations placed on them.
- My second line of enquiry was to consider the progress that disadvantaged pupils make. This was because these pupils made lower progress than their peers and others nationally, particularly in reading by the end of key stage 2 in 2017.
- Leadership for disadvantaged pupils has been developed further this year. The new leader is enthusiastic and has ensured that there are effective and close monitoring systems in place to help raise the achievement of these pupils.
- Your governors ensure that additional funds are thoughtfully used and are

allocated to reduce the barriers that disadvantaged pupils at your school face. Governors have an increasingly effective understanding of the impact of this funding so they can hold you to account for the progress disadvantaged pupils make.

- You have included the progress that disadvantaged pupils make in your school improvement plan. New processes and procedures are firmly in place for working closely with parents so that you can more precisely improve the progress their children make. However, the impact is still to be seen. More of your disadvantaged pupils are still to reach the required standard in reading and writing by the end of key stage 2.
- My final line of enquiry related to the early years. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of pupils who have reached a good level of development has been very slowly rising. In 2016, it was the first time that children's achievement reached a similar standard to that of other children nationally. I wanted to consider whether children make good progress from their starting points and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Children are happy and start school life well. In Nursery, they know the routines and are developing their independent skills quickly and effectively in a vibrant learning environment. Transition arrangements into Reception are in place and well managed so that children start Reception well.
- In Reception, children's books show they are making progress and developing their literacy and numeracy skills. You agree that, in the past, the assessments at the beginning of the year have not been an accurate measure of children's more typical starting points. You have made the accurate use of assessment a focus so that teachers can ensure that children make effective progress from their accurate starting points. Teachers are not yet using the information they have with sufficient precision when planning learning activities to meet children's needs. We agreed that some children, especially those who are disadvantaged, are not making accelerated progress so even more achieve a good level of development.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils make even better progress in reading so that the proportion of pupils who reach the higher standard is more consistently in line with the national average
- the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who achieve the required standard in reading and writing by the end of key stage 2 continues to improve so that these pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education
- adults use their assessment information in the early years with even greater precision so that more children achieve a good level of development, especially those who are disadvantaged.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- At the start of the inspection, we discussed the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' learning.
- Documents, such as the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school improvement plans, were evaluated.
- Together, we observed pupils learning in all classes, including the hearing impaired unit, over the course of the inspection. We looked at samples of pupils' work in each class to evaluate the progress pupils are making over time. We observed the teaching of phonics in Year 1.
- I spoke informally with pupils during lessons regarding their learning.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements, records, files and documentation were examined. Discussions were held with the safeguarding leader.
- I met with the chair of governors and three other governors.
- The views of the 56 parents who responded to Parent View, the 20 staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the seven pupils who completed the online pupil questionnaire were taken into account. I considered 34 parental comments from the free-text service available during the inspection.