

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



29 February 2016

Wendy Fox
Headteacher
Four Elms Primary School
Bough Beech Road
Four Elms
Edenbridge
Kent
TN8 6NE

Dear Ms Fox

Short inspection Four Elms Primary School

Following my visit to the school on Tuesday 2 February 2016, 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 October 2010.

This school continues to be good.

At the time of the last inspection, the inspector recognised many strong qualities of the school. Engagement with parents was judged to be outstanding and all other aspects were judged to be good. Pupils were said to flourish socially and make good progress academically. Leaders and managers were commended for showing drive for improvement and managing changes in staffing very effectively. These strengths remain. Pupils are safe, self-assured, thoughtful and well behaved. They make a strong contribution to the life and direction of the school. They relish a challenge, achieve well academically and socially, and are able to step confidently on to secondary school. Parents wholeheartedly agree, and believe that their children are enjoying a high-quality, well-rounded education.

The inspector identified achievement in science, particularly the depth of study and the quality of pupils' writing in science, as an area for improvement. He also recommended that the school should give pupils more opportunities to learn about and appreciate cultural diversity in modern Britain. Leaders and staff have addressed these issues effectively. There is a strong emphasis on enquiry and problem solving which enables pupils to explore scientific ideas, and there is good-quality writing in science. The school also has an exceptionally strong focus on values, including respect and tolerance. This, along with the in-depth study of issues such as racism, current and historic, and different faiths, support pupils' understanding of cultural diversity. You are aware that even more could be done to develop this further.

There have been recent changes in staffing, which once again you have managed very well. Relationships are positive, and the staff are proud to be part of the school and enjoy working here. All members of the school community are fully signed up to the values of the school. Staff are adapting well to changes in the age groups they teach and new staff have settled in very well. There is some excellent practice in fully involving pupils in understanding and promoting their own learning, but although all staff are signed up to this way of working, not all are quite as adept at putting it into practice just yet. Also, although the youngest children are happy and achieving well, there is more to do to make sure that interesting activities are provided for them to explore and extend their learning independently. Staff working with this group need to make sure that they capitalise on every opportunity for the children to develop their communication skills.

Staff, pupils, parents, governors and local authority colleagues have full confidence in you and are fulsome in their praise for your leadership skills. You and the governors provide very strong purpose and direction. You are all fully committed to making sure that this school is a place where every pupil, member of staff and governor will be enthusiastic learners, show confidence, grit and determination, take risks, learn from mistakes and set themselves highly ambitious personal goals. You involve everybody, including the pupils, in evaluating the strengths of the school and those areas that would benefit from further improvement. Self-evaluation is honest and improvement plans are ambitious but achievable. As a result, the school is vibrant, learning is interesting and pupils and staff are motivated to do their very best.

Safeguarding is effective.

- All staff and parents say that pupils are very safe in school. The systems for ensuring children's health and safety are rigorous and effective. Policies have been reviewed this academic year and are up to date. New staff are thoroughly briefed on the school's procedures and information is displayed prominently in the staffroom to support staff should they have any concerns about a pupil's safety or well-being.
- You and the governors provide regular training on aspects of keeping children safe and understand recent requirements, such as safeguarding children from the risk of extremism. Rigorous systems are in place to ensure pupils' safety throughout the day, particularly when they are using the road outside the school. Pupils know how to stay safe and there is little or no bullying. Pupils want to come to school and their attendance is above average.

Inspection findings

- Leaders, staff and pupils share and demonstrate the school's values. There is a strong, purposeful feel to the school. There is also a sense that, from Freddy Fit Club first thing in the morning, through lessons, lunchtime and after-school clubs, everyone enjoys being in school, plays a full part and does their very best.

- Pupils behave exceptionally well and enjoy learning. During the visit, they demonstrated many of values, including courtesy, reflection, grittiness and trying hard.
- Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils' achievement in all national assessments has been above average over several years. They make good progress and that is evident in their current books as well as historically.
- The involvement of pupils in understanding and promoting their own learning is a key aim of the school and there is some exceptional practice, particularly with the oldest pupils, but it is not yet consistently outstanding across the whole school.
- The oldest pupils have a keen understanding of how well they are learning and how to improve their work, and they take personal responsibility for setting their own ambitious targets. They share their successes and aspirations with their parents and carers through PowerPoint presentations at learning review meetings.
- Pupils regularly evaluate their own and their partners' work and they are able to reflect on their learning and identify specific ways in which they can improve. For example, in a class 3 writing lesson, pupils identified key improvements such as including embedded clauses or adding adverbs to show their partners how to make their writing more effective. In a Year 6 mathematics session, pupils readily explained what they were learning and why they had chosen particular levels of challenge. The older pupils' mathematics books showed a strong emphasis on problem solving and reasoning which they are clearly relishing.
- However, although the older pupils have opportunities to take responsibility for their learning and have opportunities to choose the levels of challenge for themselves, this practice is not quite as strong for the youngest pupils. During the visit, although the Reception children enjoyed themselves and were keen to learn, there were missed opportunities to promote thinking, creative learning, speaking and listening.
- The impact of the school's enquiry approach is evident across different subjects and in their homework, where pupils are given a range of possible activities to extend their school learning through individual research.
- Pupils talked enthusiastically about how they were motivated by a visit from two Olympic athletes who talked to them as part of the Inspire programme about setting and reaching personal goals. The school enables pupils to achieve well across different subjects including physical education. This small school punches well above its weight when it comes to success in competitive sports.
- Relationships are strong and children are happy. Pupils' views are respected and listened to. They make a difference to the direction of the school. For example, older pupils organise lunchtime clubs for younger pupils. During the visit, pupils enjoyed lunchtime dance and art clubs. Governors meet annually with the school council and report to each other about the impact of the work of both groups over the year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should:

- make sure that early years staff make the most of opportunities to develop the children's language and communication skills and provide better opportunities for children to explore and extend their own learning
- share the excellent practice that already exists in the school to support all adults in enabling pupils to evaluate their own learning, set ambitious personal goals and take responsibility for their own progress.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, three members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. We visited all of the teaching groups during the day to observe the quality of teaching and learning. We also looked at a sample of science books. I took account of three staff questionnaires, 30 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the school's most recent parent survey. I spoke to a number of parents at the start of the school day. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about teaching, children's achievement, training records, safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. I also looked at, and discussed with you, the evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the current improvement plans.