

Fen Ditton Primary School

Horningsea Road, Fen Ditton, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB5 8SZ

Inspection dates

7–8 December 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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

- Leaders and governors are highly ambitious for pupils. They have successfully created a culture of high expectations that is shared by all staff.
- Governors provide good support and challenge to leaders. They use the school's improvement plan well to hold leaders to account for their actions in raising standards.
- School leadership has been effective in bringing about improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes. The quality of teaching is now good and pupils make good progress in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics.
- The development of subject leadership has had a positive impact, particularly on the outcomes for English and mathematics across the school for all pupils.
- Effective leadership of the early years ensures that children get a good start to their full-time education and are well prepared, at the end of Reception, for learning in key stage 1.
- The policies and procedures to keep pupils safe are effective and well managed. Pupils enjoy school; they say that they feel safe and know how to keep safe.
- Disadvantaged pupils get the support they need and as a result they make similar progress to other pupils nationally who have similar starting points.
- The focus on improving teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics has ensured that many more pupils are now well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Although leaders use assessment information effectively to inform them about pupils' progress, this is not as effectual for most-able pupils. Consequently, on occasions, the most able pupils do not make the progress they should and not enough reach the higher standards of which they are capable.
- Although attendance for all pupils is in line with the national average, 2016 information shows that attendance for pupils eligible for free school meals and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that leaders use pupils' progress information to focus in depth on how successfully pupils are learning, particularly in the case of the most able pupils and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further by ensuring that teachers use pupils' progress information to plan more precisely so that there is greater challenge in lessons, especially for the most able pupils, to enable more pupils to make greater progress and achieve the higher level of attainment.
- Make sure that attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is as good as that of other pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher and governors have developed a strong leadership team that is ambitious for the school and makes a good contribution to the school's improvement priorities. Leaders are united and all share the school's vision and the drive towards improving standards.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment rigorously. They have regular meetings with teachers to check on the progress pupils are making in phonics, reading, writing and mathematics. These meetings identify pupils who are at risk of underachieving. Any issues are quickly addressed through, for example, support programmes that enable pupils to make the progress they should. Consequently, most pupils make good progress from their typically low starting points.
- Subject leaders are highly effective. They ensure that there is consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in English and mathematics. They routinely monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in their subjects, and provide effective training and support for teachers and teaching assistants.
- New staff are very well supported by middle and senior leaders. Newly qualified teachers teach alongside experienced ones. This ensures that the consistent approach to the teaching of English and mathematics is maintained. They say that they value the support they receive. As a result, new staff thrive and some are ready to take on whole-school responsibilities after a short time at the school.
- The local authority has supported school improvement well, particularly in the development of subject leadership. Teaching in English and mathematics in particular has improved markedly as a result of strong and systematic leadership, which is now being shared across other areas of the curriculum.
- The school offers a broad curriculum which inspires pupils to want to learn and helps deepen pupils' learning. Topics include stimulating opening activities where pupils are encouraged to debate or research a topic. For example, pupils debated the purpose of Stonehenge and their research of Egypt led to pupils wanting to learn about Cleopatra. As a result, pupils love learning and achieve well in these subjects.
- Leaders use additional physical education and sport funding effectively. Experienced sports coaches are used to teach alongside teachers to develop the latter's confidence and skills. The school is able to offer a wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities at lunchtimes and after school. Consequently, pupils' participation in competitive sports festivals has increased.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively and is having a positive impact on disadvantaged pupils, including those who are the most able. Most of the funding goes towards additional staff who support pupils, in smaller groups, who are at risk of underachieving. As a result, these pupils make accelerated progress.

- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils understand 'the growth mind-set' as 'anyone who tries can achieve'. Assemblies are inspiring and pupils learn about values such as resilience and aspiration. For example, the school had a visit from a local Paralympian, who spoke to the pupils about his journey, from when he left Fen Ditton Primary School, to winning a gold medal in the 2016 Olympics in Rio. Pupils gained an insight into how commitment and determination can help individuals to succeed.
- The school successfully promotes British values through its own vision and values. This is evident from classroom displays and when speaking with pupils. Pupils told inspectors, 'we have different skills, some people need help and some people don't need that much help'. The school parliament encourages pupils to take responsibility for aspects of their school, which they do with pride. Parents believe that the school supports pupils to become hard working and responsible individuals. For example, as one parent responding to Ofsted's online questionnaire said, 'Fen Ditton is a friendly, welcoming environment where children are encouraged to achieve their best and are challenged appropriately. The culture is that of taking responsibility and supporting one another.' Parents believe that the school ensures that pupils are ready for the next stage in their education.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and its improvements. All of the parents who responded to Parent View would recommend the school to another parent.
- While the school's assessment systems effectively identify pupils who might be at risk of underachieving, pupils' individual progress is not being tracked as precisely as it could be. Consequently, not enough pupils, particularly the most able, make better than expected progress in English and mathematics or achieve the higher level of attainment.
- Prior to the inspection, the school's website did not meet statutory requirements. While this was improved during the time of the inspection, leaders acknowledge that to ensure that parents have access to the most recent school information, the website requires regular updating in order to be compliant.

Governance of the school

- Governors are highly ambitious and want the very best for all pupils. They have worked effectively with leaders to create a culture of high expectations.
- Governors are skilled and knowledgeable and attend appropriate training, including on safeguarding, to improve their role. The governing body brings to the school a range of professional skills from diverse backgrounds, which they use effectively in their roles. They challenge the school's spending and the impact of the pupil premium and physical education and sport premium funding.
- Governors are aware of their roles and responsibilities and committed to improving pupils' outcomes. They make planned visits to classes, look at examples of pupils' learning in their books, and talk with pupils and their parents about their views.

- Governors ensure that new staff feel supported, and they meet staff informally to check on their welfare. They question staff about school improvement and therefore have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and what it needs to do to improve further.
- The minutes of governing body meetings show that governors regularly challenge leaders about pupil performance information and question end-of-key-stage results when pupils' attainment is below the national average.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school carries out appropriate checks on those appointed to work at the school. Leaders ensure that staff and governors undertake regular training to ensure that their knowledge of child protection procedures is up to date.
- The school looks after vulnerable pupils well, as confirmed in the report from a child protection audit carried out this year. All child protection files show chronology. They are ordered meticulously, cross referenced with pupils' individual files and actions summarised so that no further concerns are missed.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school, and the majority of parents who completed the Ofsted questionnaire agreed that their child is safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Teachers are enthusiastic about pupils' learning and experience positive relationships with their pupils. Pupils receive many opportunities to deepen their learning and to embed what they have learned, such as writing for a range of purposes across many subjects. Pupils are enthusiastic about learning because they are prepared well before they start an activity and many are appropriately challenged.
- The school has worked hard to develop a consistent approach for the teaching and learning of mathematics. The drive to improve mathematics is evident in the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Pupils learn to reason and then explain methods when solving problems. Teachers' skilful questioning ensures that pupils think more deeply about their answers. For example, pupils were asked to prove that one eighth is half of a quarter. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to discuss and use resources to explain their strategies and methods. Pupils make good progress in mathematics.
- The whole-school approach to the teaching of writing and the emphasis on communication and language have ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in writing is consistent across the school. Pupils are given opportunities to rehearse the language they will need to use before they start writing. This has led to pupils enjoying writing activities. For example, one pupil said that previously she didn't enjoy writing because she couldn't think of any ideas, 'but now we talk and plan and I write so much more'.

- Pupils have opportunities to embed key skills. Progress is seen from the youngest children in Reception, choosing to write Christmas cards, to the older pupils who write fluently and in detail about the character of Shakespeare's Macbeth. Consequently the quality of pupils' writing has improved and the quantity has increased.
- Highly skilled teachers provide support, praise and challenge for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for pupils who speak English as an additional language. For example, a group of pupils who have barriers to phonics were supported to read aloud and identify sounds in complex words such as 'igh' in 'lightning'. Although pupils found the task challenging, they persevered. Because of teachers' high expectations, these pupils make good progress.
- Subject leaders are quick to identify gaps in the teaching and learning of English and mathematics. Through effective small-group teaching and learning, all pupil groups, particularly disadvantaged pupils, consolidate and deepen their understanding.
- Teachers use pupil achievement information to help plan activities that will ensure that pupils make at least expected progress. However, some pupils, particularly the most able, do not make more than expected progress or achieve the higher level of attainment. Therefore, they do not always make as much progress as they could.
- The quality of marking and feedback across the school is effective. Pupils respond well to the advice they are given and so their work improves as a result.
- Science is taught effectively across the school. Lessons frequently give pupils opportunities to carry out investigations. Pupils enjoy being able to apply the skills they have learned in a practical way and therefore most pupils make good progress.
- Physical education (PE) is well led in the school. The subject leader has built networks with other schools and linked with a college to support the school's teaching of PE and assessment of how well pupils achieve. This has led to increased participation in extra-curricular clubs, such as cross-country club, and internal and external competition.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The forest school curriculum encourages pupils to learn how to work together and how to support each other. Pupils engage positively with outdoor learning, working together to build dens, make camp fires and explore the outside space. As a result, pupils develop strong friendships, which inspectors observed in the playground, in lessons and when speaking with pupils.
- The school teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of situations, including when using the internet. Pupils say that they feel safe, and their parents agree. One parent commented that 'the school is very focused on providing a safe and happy environment for the children'.
- The school's e-safety programme is taught in lessons and through assemblies. Newsletters explain to parents how to support their children to stay safe when using the internet. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online.

- Parents say that the school is a friendly place. Many parents comment that their children are always eager to learn. They praise the opportunities for pupils to work together. As one parent said, 'the way the children support each other, particularly across different age groups, is particularly good'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Parents believe that behaviour is well managed and say that pupils are well behaved and encouraged to respect and support each other.
- Pupils take part in anti-bullying week and say that bullying is rare and dealt with effectively on the very few occasions it occurs. The school's behaviour records and logs confirm this.
- Where pupils' behaviour is related to specific social and emotional needs, the school quickly puts support in place to help pupils improve their behaviour. This includes working closely and effectively with families to learn what works best for their child.
- Behaviour in lessons is good. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and a show a real interest in making progress. As one pupil said, 'I love coming to school because I like learning'. Pupils enjoy being challenged and acknowledge that 'it is fine to struggle'.
- Overall, pupils' attendance is line with the national average. However, the school has identified that the attendance of a small number of vulnerable pupils needs to improve. Leaders are already taking effective action by working closely with the families to support these pupils to improve their attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Across all year groups, pupils produce work that is appropriate to their age and stage of development. Pupils' work is presented well and the quality of handwriting is of a high standard. The work in pupils' books shows that most pupils make good progress throughout the school.
- The outcomes of the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 are showing a slight decline over the last three years. However, inspectors observed a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics across the school. Small-group teaching in key stage 1 is helping pupils to make accelerated progress in phonics. Pupils who read to inspectors from different year groups read fluently and with expression. Younger pupils use their phonics knowledge well to support their reading. Clear progression was evident in reading from Reception to Year 6.
- Although attainment for reading was slightly below the national average at the end of Years 2 and 6 in 2016, progress overall for pupils at the end of Year 6 was above the national average. The progress of disadvantaged pupils, most-able pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils was also above the national average. The school's own assessment information shows that pupils across all year groups are on track to make at least expected progress, and more pupils are predicted to make more than expected progress in reading.

- In 2016, attainment in writing was broadly in line with the national average at the end of Year 6. Progress was good for most pupil groups, including disadvantaged pupils. Observations of teaching and learning and pupils' work in books show that most pupils are making good progress in all year groups.
- Attainment in mathematics was broadly in line with the national average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2016. However, the proportion of pupils who made expected or more than expected progress from their starting points was not high enough. The school's assessment processes identified that the most able pupils, who achieve well in their number work, are not always able to explain their answers or use strong reasoning skills. Leaders have identified this as an area for development and teachers are providing activities to help pupils explain their thinking and reasoning. Consequently, current most-able pupils are making good progress and in some cases, better than expected progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making similar progress to other pupils. They too have benefited from the increase in support sessions and the consistent approach in the teaching of English and mathematics. These pupils make good progress when working in small groups with teachers and teaching assistants.
- The proportion of children in the early years who achieve a good level of development is below the national average. However, this has improved over the last three years. Current information shows that more children are currently expected to achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision is well led. The early years leader is knowledgeable and experienced. She has a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. She responds quickly when areas are identified for improvement.
- Children enter the setting from a number of different nurseries. As well as making home visits to new families, the early years team visits the nurseries throughout the summer term to ensure a smooth transition. Consequently, children settle well into Reception.
- Communication and engagement with parents are highly effective. Parents are provided with lots of useful information about what their child is learning. Early years leaders provide helpful training sessions for parents on how to support the teaching of phonics and provide resources to use at home with their children. As a result, children make good progress in phonics.
- The children in the early years make good progress from their typically low starting points. Early years leaders use effective systems for tracking children's achievement. They have an accurate view of what the children know and can do. Children's 'learning journeys' show good progress since September and that targets are used well to identify children's next steps in their learning.

- The effective safeguarding procedures implemented for the whole school include the early years. Clear routines and teachers' high expectations ensure that children are safe and move calmly and purposefully around the classroom. They are able to work independently at an activity for a sustained period of time. This allows teachers to work with children in small groups, for example, to support children's handwriting or mathematical understanding. As a result, most children, including the disadvantaged and most able children, make good progress in writing and mathematics.
- The early years environment is stimulating inside and out. Activities are well organised and matched to children's needs. As a result, early years assessment information shows that most children are making good progress in all areas of learning.
- Provision in the early years for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. The early years staff know their children well. Detailed observations and assessment notes show that these children make good progress. Children who need more help with their behaviour are supported to make the right choices for themselves. As a result, these children make at least expected progress.
- Children who speak English as an additional language make good progress from their starting points. Teaching assistants are nurturing and support children to settle quickly into school and gain confidence. They support the teaching of phonics well using resources such as picture cards and games. Consequently, children feel safe and have trusting relationships with adults, which enables them to make good progress.
- Children are provided with many opportunities to write. Children are taught cursive handwriting early and some children are already joining. On many occasions, when given choices, children will choose to write. They are proud of their writing, which is celebrated and displayed around the classroom. As a result, children make good progress in writing.
- Children are enthusiastic and keen to learn. During a mathematics lesson, children were keen to share their answers about which teacher had the most Christmas presents. Children could count and explain the differences in number. Children were then provided with opportunities to read, write and count numbers in a variety of activities. As a result, children are able to deepen their understanding of number by recognising the connections between the number of items and the written number.

School details

Unique reference number	110605
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10022966

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	James Pilgrim
Headteacher	Mark Askew
Telephone number	01223 292342
Website	www.fenditton.cambs.sch.uk
Email address	office@fenditton.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 February 2015

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of specified information on its website because the school's behaviour policy and complaints policy are out of date.
- There has been a new headteacher and a new chair of the governing body since the previous inspection.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Children in the early years attend full time.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is slightly above average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching and learning across all year groups.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the headteacher, governors, a representative from the local authority and school staff, including senior and middle leaders.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at pupils' work, information on pupils' attainment and progress, curriculum planning, and records of behaviour and safety. They also scrutinised the monitoring of teaching and the management of teachers' performance, minutes of governing body meetings, safeguarding documents, including mandatory checks made on the recruitment of new staff, and the school's website.
- Discussions were held with a group of pupils and informal conversations took place during lesson times and in the playground.
- The inspection team listened to pupils from both key stages read and talked to them about the books they enjoy.
- The inspector took account of 21 responses to the parent online questionnaire, Parent View, including the text responses. Inspectors spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day.
- The questionnaires completed by nine members of staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Cindy Impey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Christina Kenna

Ofsted Inspector

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