

The Mill Primary Academy

Ifield Drive, Ifield, Crawley RH11 0EL

Inspection dates	25–26 May 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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders are ambitious and determined that every pupil will succeed. Staff share the leaders' vision and work hard in support.
- Leaders have ensured that teaching is good throughout the school. As a result, all groups of pupils make good progress. This includes those with special educational needs or disability, those who speak English as an additional language, disadvantaged pupils and the most able.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate. Staff take effective action when areas to improve are identified.
- Pupils experience a wide-ranging curriculum which prepares them well for the next stages of their education and for life in modern Britain.
- Adults show exemplary care for pupils. Pupils are safe in the school and feel safe. Bullying is rare and, if it does occur, dealt with well by staff.
- Leaders and staff have the overwhelming trust and confidence of parents. Parents are pleased with their children's progress and the good care which staff provide.
- Good teaching in Reception Year ensures children make a promising start to their education at the school.
- Governors hold leaders firmly to account for the smooth running of the school and its continual improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Leaders have not yet overcome the persistent absence of a minority of pupils.
- Teaching does not provide rich and inspiring opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematics and English skills in other subjects.
- For a minority of pupils, typically boys, their achievement in writing is not as high as in reading and mathematics.
- Governors' understanding of the school's performance is not deeply informed by the information they gather, including parents' views.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to enrich the learning of all groups of pupils, including the most able, and support further improvement in boys' writing, by ensuring:
 - teaching offers pupils regular rich and inspiring opportunities to read, write and use mathematics skills, particularly in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Improve leadership by ensuring:
 - the school's whole curriculum provides rich planned opportunities which inspire all groups of pupils, including boys in their writing and the most able, to practise and extend their skills and experience in reading, writing and mathematics
 - governors enrich their knowledge of the school's performance by thoughtful consideration of the information they gather, including parents' views.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that the remaining persistent absence of a minority of pupils reduces further.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The executive headteacher and headteacher promote a clear, inspiring vision for the school. Working exceptionally well together, they have led rapid and secure improvement since last September. Their determination and hard work motivates the whole staff team to strive together, to provide the best care and education for all the school's pupils. The executive headteacher and headteacher swiftly won the trust and confidence of pupils, parents and staff, which had reached a low point before they joined.
- Senior leaders' evaluations of the school's performance are accurate. They ensure teachers record accurate assessments of pupils' achievement and they use this information incisively, to identify priorities for improvement. Leaders then take swift and effective action, so that teaching and pupils' progress have improved significantly since September. Senior leaders ensure that teachers' performance management objectives are linked well to the school's improvement priorities and to teachers' individual needs.
- The executive headteacher and headteacher take a robust approach when they check teaching. Strengths in teaching are identified and shared, while support and relevant training are provided promptly where needed. Staff welcome this approach. They learn readily from one another and from training and coaching. The school's professional development programme is keenly matched to school priorities and the needs of individual staff.
- The joint work of the assistant headteacher and special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is a strength. Working closely with the school's attendance officer, they have reduced pupils' absences significantly. Their efforts have also improved vulnerable pupils' behaviour, so that exclusions have reduced considerably. The assistant headteacher and SENCo carefully consider the individual needs of vulnerable pupils and ensure the right additional support is provided. They monitor individual pupils' attendance and progress closely, maintaining close contact with parents. As a result, pupils' success and confidence grows, improving their attendance, behaviour and achievement. Nevertheless, a small group of pupils continue to experience persistent absence.
- Subject leaders play an effective role in the school's improvement. Each half term, class teachers report to leaders, including those responsible for English and mathematics, provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) and provision for the most able pupils. Discussions about individual pupils lead to changes in teaching and additional support, to accelerate pupils' progress. This approach has contributed strongly to improvement in pupils' learning throughout the school.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. Whole-school topics draw learning in the different subjects of the national curriculum together well, enriched by educational visits. Year 6, for example, recently visited London to see the Golden Hynde, and Year 3 are currently comparing life in Ifield to Brighton seafront. Learning out-of-doors is supported well through use of the pond and 'farm' on site. However, inspiring opportunities for reading, writing and mathematics are not a prominent feature of the curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics. Subject leaders are working well together to set out plans for September to ensure this development, but these are not yet in place.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is a strength. Leaders regularly promote thoughtfulness and reflection in assembly. A dedicated area out-of-doors, focused on water flowing around a small millstone, is set aside for class listening times and quiet thinking. Clear rules for pupils' behaviour, and the consistent example of courtesy and good conduct provided by staff, ensure pupils learn well about right and wrong. Pupils readily take up opportunities as prefects and playground buddies, learning to contribute to society. Classes are named after prominent artists, increasing pupils' cultural awareness.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. The fundamental British values of democracy and the rule of law, tolerance, free speech and mutual respect are taught well. Pupils have devised their own code of conduct for activities in 'Room 13'. Year 6 recently studied British democracy and how laws are made. In religious education, pupils regularly learn about the major religions represented in the United Kingdom. Special assemblies mark festivals such as Eid, Hanukkah and Christmas. 'Language of the month', currently Tamil, encourages pupils' positive attitudes to the increasing range spoken in the school. Pupils care well for one another, including as 'young interpreters' supporting new pupils who are learning English. A team of Year 5 pupils recently visited other schools with the executive headteacher, to see how fundamental British values are promoted there.
- Leaders ensure the pupil premium is used well, to promote the care and progress of disadvantaged pupils. (The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils entitled to free school meals and children looked after.) Many of these pupils have special educational needs (SEN) or disability, so the SENCo gives careful consideration to the exact personal and learning support needed to help them succeed. The SENCo carefully assesses the impact that any interventions provided have on these pupils'

learning. As a result, well-targeted additional support, including counselling and nurture provision, helps these pupils make good progress and catch up with their peers. A number of disadvantaged pupils have also been helped to improve their attendance and behaviour, so they now attend well and no longer experience exclusion. Nevertheless, a minority continue to experience persistent absence.

- Leaders make effective use of additional government funding for sport. A specialist coach works successfully alongside staff, to improve teaching and extend the range of sports covered in physical education lessons. Pupils' participation in sport has been increased through the provision of a wider range of after-school activities including basketball and girls' football.
- Overwhelmingly, the parents inspectors spoke with commented enthusiastically about how much they value recent changes in the school and the strengths of leaders and staff. Many parents are also delighted with positive changes in their children's attitude to school and their consequent good progress. Some key stage 2 parents expressed concern about frequent changes of class teacher recently. This concern is understood by leaders, who take effective action to ensure continuity in pupils' learning and care when staff change.
- The academy trust has supported leaders well, particularly in the last 18 months. The trust ensured capable interim leadership before supporting governors in the appointment of the current senior leaders. The trust has provided effective practical support to improve teaching by making arrangements with local good schools. Governance has been enhanced by direct coaching from the trust's senior director, and through links made by the trust for governors, with effective governors in other schools. The trust has also provided helpful training for governors, particularly to develop their understanding of published information about pupils' achievement.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors are ambitious and passionate for the success of every pupil in the school. One governor told inspectors 'We want parents in Crawley to be disappointed when they cannot have a place here for their child'.
- Governors hold leaders firmly to account for the school's continuing improvement by asking questions in governors' meetings about the reports leaders provide, and in regular one-to-one meetings.
- Governors are hard working. They ensure they are well informed about the life of the school through regular visits and tours. Recently these have focused on safeguarding, the teaching of writing and the way teachers assess and record pupils' achievement. However, how governors analyse and respond to the information they gather is not richly developed. An example of this was when governors offered an electronic survey to parents at a recent parents' evening, but the outcomes were not analysed and considered by the governing body.
- Governors are well informed about pupils' achievement, including the achievement of different groups such as boys and girls, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs or disability. Governors also know which subjects pupils do best in. They are therefore aware that, for some boys, improving their writing continues to be a priority.
- Governors are well trained for their roles and keep abreast of changes in requirements. Most recently, their training focused on changes to the national curriculum and to national safeguarding requirements in education.
- Governors ensure the sound financial management of the school, challenging leaders for example about how the recent proposed spending on school library furniture would directly benefit pupils' learning. They rightly value the diligent work of the school's business manager. Governors ensure that additional government funding such as the pupil premium and sports funding is used according to guidelines and benefits pupils as intended. Governors ensure decisions about teachers' pay are linked fairly to performance.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior leaders and the SENCo work as a highly effective team in leading this work, particularly through their weekly 'team around the children' meetings where any concerns are discussed and school support or external referrals decided. Thorough and regular training ensures all staff are alert to the risks which pupils may face. Staff make prompt referrals of any concerns, reliably using the school's well-established reporting systems. Staff are acutely aware of local priorities to protect children and young people from the risk of radicalisation, and watchful for signs of this. In lessons and assemblies, pupils are regularly reminded of online risks. Governors oversee the school's safeguarding work diligently. Care and attention by premises staff ensures the site is secure and safe, including currently while building contractors are on-site. Visitors' access to the premises is tightly controlled. The school's focus on good attendance includes prompt checks on unexplained absences. Parents are overwhelmingly confident that their children are safe and well cared for in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- Teachers know pupils well. In English and mathematics teachers use accurate assessments of pupils' progress to inform careful planning for their next steps in learning. Pupils engage well during lessons, because teaching and activities are set at the right level of challenge for them.
- Teachers observe pupils' response to teaching carefully during lessons. They usually move learning on promptly when pupils are ready, or revisit information if necessary. Inspectors heard a teacher say 'I think you've got this. We'll do one more and then move on.' Where teachers are still developing this skill, leaders are providing effective coaching.
- Throughout the school, teachers ensure that classrooms are well organised and uncluttered, with attractive displays which celebrate pupils' successes while providing information to support their further progress. This helps to create a calm and purposeful environment where pupils concentrate on learning.
- Phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) are taught well in key stage 1. Staff are well trained in the school's systematic approach so that pupils experience consistent teaching as they move through the stages of the school's programme. All the adults involved show a good understanding of phonics and speak clearly when they say the sounds. This is helpful to all pupils, particularly those who are in the early stages of learning English.
- Pupils' skills for reading, writing and mathematics are taught methodically from Reception Year to Year 6. Teachers know exactly the knowledge and skills their pupils are expected to acquire by the end of the school year, and teach systematically towards these goals. Teachers are ambitious for pupils' success and ensure pupils know what is expected. A pupil in key stage 2 told an inspector 'The story I wrote this term is close to age-related expectations'. Nevertheless, a minority of pupils, typically boys, continue to achieve less well in writing than in reading and mathematics.
- The specialist teacher for pupils who speak English as an additional language provides expert teaching and support, which helps these pupils settle quickly into life at the school and learn English well. The motto on the classroom door, 'Success starts here', sums up the teacher's positive approach.
- The SENCo ensures that pupils' special educational needs are identified promptly and accurately. Specific additional teaching is provided, usually by well-trained teaching assistants, supporting the learning of these pupils well including those supported by the pupil premium.
- Teachers have high expectations for the most able pupils, particularly in English, mathematics and phonics. Teachers move their learning on promptly in these lessons, expecting work of a higher standard, completed with greater independence.
- Teachers ensure pupils read a good selection of literature. They teach pupils to write in a range of styles during English lessons. In mathematics lessons, pupils are given ample opportunities to apply their skills to solving mathematical problems. Art is promoted through weekly artists' visits and the dedicated art space, 'Room 13'. Inspectors saw an imaginative approach to pupils' science learning, in a video made by pupils about the human body. However, teaching does not consistently provide pupils, including the most able, with rich opportunities to develop their English and mathematics skills in other subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **is good**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff provide a consistent model of courtesy and consideration which sets a positive tone. They are unwaveringly patient and firm to help pupils understand right and wrong and how to show respect for others and themselves. Pupils are confident they are cared for well by the adults.
- Nurture provision provides high levels of care and attention for individual pupils, mostly boys, who need this help. Pupils come away from their usual classroom for timetabled sessions with well-trained staff. The adults skilfully combine opportunities for pupils to reflect on their feelings and behaviour with support for academic learning. This boosts pupils' confidence and self-esteem. As a result of nurture provision, exclusions at the school have reduced significantly and vulnerable pupils are making better progress, though some continue to experience difficulties.
- Adults in the before- and after-school clubs provide a caring environment where pupils can relax and play games and enjoy healthy snacks. A lunchtime club away from the main playground helps pupils who need to be taught how to play happily with others.
- Pupils told inspectors that bullying is rare, and they were sure adults would step in promptly to resolve any issues. The reliable records kept by staff show very few incidents of bullying or racist name-calling.
- Pupils have various opportunities to serve the school, as prefects, school councillors, playground buddies

and young interpreters for example. Pupils take these responsibilities seriously. At a recent parents' evening, one young interpreter stepped in unprompted, to help newly arrived parents speak with their child's teacher.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school because staff consistently apply the clear behaviour policy. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the rewards and certificates they can earn and are proud when applauded in assembly.
- Pupils are welcoming to visitors and show good manners. They reply politely when greeted, sometimes offering a handshake, freely open doors for passing adults and readily offer their help. Pupils are proud of their uniform, particularly school councillors, prefects and young interpreters who earn the privilege of wearing a light blue jumper and tie.
- The assistant headteacher ensures that all possible steps are taken to avoid exclusion, and to ensure this is applied fairly when necessary. Pupils are carefully integrated back into the school on their return. As a result, exclusions have reduced significantly and now affect a very small minority of pupils. When pupils are excluded, this is typically for being disruptive and not for hurting others. A very small minority of parents expressed a concern through Ofsted's online survey Parent View, that staff do not manage pupils' behaviour well. This concern was not borne out by the inspection.
- The majority of pupils attend well, including some who previously experienced regular absences for no good reason. Pupils were proud to report to inspectors the percentage attendance in their classes and how this has improved. Nevertheless, despite leaders' best efforts to support parents in fulfilling their legal responsibilities, a small minority of pupils continue to experience persistent absence from school. This undermines their confidence and progress. Individual parents told inspectors the school was too strict about their child's absences. Inspectors found that leaders challenge and support parents fairly, to improve pupils' attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils make good progress so that attainment is rising throughout the school, including for disadvantaged pupils. Gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others at the school are closing rapidly. In some year groups disadvantaged pupils are doing at least as well as their peers.
- Pupils in Year 6 in 2015 made good progress from very low starting points. They attained levels which broadly matched the national average, particularly in reading and mathematics. This achievement marked improvement in pupils' achievement at the school. Teachers' current Year 6 assessments indicate that pupils have already exceeded the standards achieved in 2015, including in writing, spelling and grammar.
- Disadvantaged pupils leaving Year 6 in 2015 were broadly three terms behind other pupils nationally. They were further behind in writing, spelling and grammar than in reading and mathematics. These gaps reflected high levels of SEN in this group of pupils. Information provided by leaders shows some made good progress from very low starting points. In the current Year 6, gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others at the school have almost completely closed.
- Pupils in Year 2 in 2015 made good progress during key stage 1, making up for a slow start in their Reception Year. The proportions of pupils who attained levels higher than those expected for their age were better than seen nationally in reading and mathematics, and matched this figure in writing. Current pupils in Year 2, including disadvantaged pupils, are making at least the same good progress.
- Pupils achieve well in phonics, where standards at the school are rising annually. In 2015, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 national phonics check broadly matched the national average. This year, a higher proportion of pupils is on track to achieve this standard, with no gaps in achievement apparent between disadvantaged pupils and others or between boys and girls.
- In the past, boys have achieved consistently less well than girls, particularly in writing. Boys' achievement in writing has improved overall and is no longer a general concern. Boys feature equally with girls in higher learning groups. Boys' books checked by inspectors showed good effort and progress being made. Nevertheless, some boys' achievement in writing does still trail that of girls.
- The most able pupils achieve well, particularly in English and mathematics. Inspectors saw pupils in Year 5 successfully tackling mathematics work more usually seen in Year 6. In Year 1, able pupils told inspectors exactly why they had adopted their chosen methods to solve multiplication problems. In Year 2 phonics sessions, teachers moved the most able pupils on without delay, to write sentences using vocabulary and English grammar more often seen in Year 3. However, the most able pupils do not often

enjoy the same opportunities to shine when recording their learning in other subjects.

Early years provision

is good

- Pupils typically enter Reception Year with skills, knowledge and understanding below those typical of their ages, and in some cases well below. Each year, an increasing proportion of children who join the school are in the very early stages of learning English as an additional language.
- Children make good progress from their starting points. In 2015, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception Year matched the proportion seen nationally. The school's information indicates a higher proportion of children are on track to achieve this standard in 2016, from lower starting points. This includes very good progress made by disadvantaged children, boys and those who speak English as an additional language. Children therefore leave Reception Year at the school prepared well for the challenges and opportunities of Year 1 and beyond.
- Children make good progress because the adults provide well-planned teaching and activities in all the areas of the early years curriculum, inside and outside. The recent classroom extension has been managed well, so that children's learning has not been disrupted but enhanced. Children are excited by opportunities to explore the world, for example by observing a caterpillar becoming a chrysalis. They are enticed to read by the way adults share books with them and inviting reading areas, inside and out-of-doors. Reception children recently visited a toy factory in connection with their 'bear' topic.
- Children behave well. They respond well to adults' example of courtesy and their firm and friendly approach to teaching. The children are taught to share and take turns, and to show respect for one another and the equipment they use. Inspectors saw the children enjoying a slide show together featuring photographs of their recent individual successes.
- Phonics is taught well in Reception Year, especially by teachers. Where necessary, effective training is supporting teaching assistants to develop skills to teach phonics well, away from the teacher. Inspectors saw the most able children able to use their growing understanding of phonics successfully when writing sentences independently.
- The children are kept very safe. Access in and out of the classrooms and outdoor area is strictly controlled. The care staff provide helps the children to feel happy and safe throughout the day, including those whose understanding of spoken English is very limited. Parents who spoke with inspectors were all confident that their children are cared for well, and delighted with their children's progress.
- The executive headteacher and assistant headteacher provide highly effective leadership of early years provision. They are supporting staff well to implement reliable ongoing assessment procedures.

School details

Unique reference number	139958
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10011717

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	412
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Nixon
Headteacher	Matt Lecuyer
Executive headteacher	Neil Small
Telephone number	01293 571 893
Website	www.themill-tkat.org
Email address	office@themill-tkat.org
Date of previous inspection	None

Information about this school

- The Mill Primary Academy is a larger-than-average sized primary school. The school converted to academy status in September 2012, sponsored by The Kemnal Academy Trust (TKAT).
- The majority of pupils come from a White British background. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are broadly average and increasing.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils receiving school support for special educational needs or disability is well above the national average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is well below this figure.
- The school runs a breakfast club and after-school club on the site.
- In 2015, the school met the current floor standards, which set out the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching throughout the school, including joint observations with the headteacher and assistant headteacher. Inspectors looked at pupils' work during lessons and on display, and examined samples of pupils' work from Reception to Year 6.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, headteacher and assistant headteacher, with a group of staff, with subject leaders and the SENCo. A meeting was held with the chair of the governing body and three other governors and with a representative of TKAT.
- Parents' views were considered through the 35 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View and in conversations with parents at the start of each day. The views of school staff were considered through the 22 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. Inspectors also talked with pupils and staff around the school.
- Inspectors observed morning breaks and lunchtime and visited the before- and after-school clubs.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents, including: leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the school's improvement plans; information about pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour, and leaders' checks on teaching; governing body records and TKAT reports. The school's safeguarding records were examined, including the central record of recruitment checks on staff.

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