

The Gateway Primary Free School

Marshfoot Road, Grays, Essex RM16 4LU

Inspection dates

21–22 February 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and governors have not ensured that pupils make enough progress for the school to remain good.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics has been significantly below that of pupils nationally for three years. Currently, the progress pupils make in mathematics varies, particularly in lower key stage 2.
- Although leaders are addressing the weakness in pupils' attainment in Year 2 and Year 6, the impact of their work is too early to assess in other year groups.
- The progress that disadvantaged pupils make varies. Leaders have not analysed the barriers to learning the pupils face robustly, or allocated funds skilfully enough to ensure that higher proportions of disadvantaged pupils achieve well.
- While pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well cared for, they have not made enough progress from their starting points. Improvements to address the weaknesses in the provision are too recent to be able to judge their impact.
- Adults' expectations of pupils are, at times, too low. The most able pupils are not provided with sufficiently challenging and interesting work for them to excel.
- Teachers do not use assessment and adapt the curriculum well enough to meet the needs of different groups of pupils in their class.
- The presentation of work, handwriting and accuracy of spelling vary across the school. Adults do not routinely insist on pupils taking a pride in their work. For a majority of pupils, their books are untidy and lack precise letter formation.

The school has the following strengths

- Children start well in Reception. They have access to a wide range of activities and learn in a safe and caring environment. Children make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered. They conduct themselves well in class and at playtimes.
- Pupils attend school well. Leaders ensure that systems and procedures for attending school are well established and effective.
- The use of the nurture group ensures that care and support are provided for those pupils who need it. As a result, their social development is catered for effectively.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for all pupils by ensuring that:
 - the proportion of pupils who make good or better progress in mathematics improves rapidly and is consistently at least in line with other pupils nationally by the end of key stage 2
 - the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard for their age by the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics combined is consistently at least in line with other pupils nationally
 - pupils in different groups make good or better progress rapidly from their starting points, which is sustained across year groups, especially lower key stage 2.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - equipping teachers with the strategies to use assessment information well and so provide pupils of all abilities with challenging and stimulating activities
 - routinely insisting upon, and modelling, the best presentation, handwriting and spelling so pupils develop consistent pride in their work.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - rigorously monitoring and analysing the progress pupils make from their starting points
 - taking swift and effective action for pupils who are falling behind
 - raising adults' expectations of what all pupils can achieve
 - making sure that the curriculum provides interesting and stimulating activities for the most able pupils to excel.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders' view of the school's overall performance is over-generous and improvements up until this academic year have been slow.
- Currently, senior leaders, supported by other leaders from the multi-academy trust, are changing systems and structures to hasten the pace of change. There is now evidence to demonstrate that pupils are making better progress. This improvement is particularly the case in the early years, Year 2 and Year 6.
- There have been many changes in the team of teaching staff. Owing to these frequent changes, leaders have focused on ensuring that teachers have high expectations of behaviour. In this they continue to be successful. However, pupils' progress has not been quick enough or consistent enough and requires improvement.
- Until this year, leaders had not established a rigorous and effective system for assessing the progress that pupils make. They have recently introduced more regular analysis of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2 and Year 6. School assessment information demonstrates that pupils in these year groups are now making stronger progress.
- Parents recognise that their children have been making inconsistent progress over time. A typical comment from some parents who commented through Ofsted's free-text service is that 'due to changing staff there is often no structure or routine for the children which affects their progress'. Inspection evidence indicates that senior staff recognise the issue and have leaders in place to support new staff so they settle quickly and well.
- The Gateway multi-academy trust provides suitable and appropriate support for the school to improve. As all its schools are within a local area, trust leaders have a strong understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school together with the needs of the pupils in the local community. The trust has strengthened the support and challenge for Gateway Primary Free School to hasten the pace of change.
- Leaders' use of additional funds, such as pupil premium, is not skilful enough. Leaders have not precisely identified the barriers for learning that disadvantaged pupils have; nor do they provide a clear rationale for how the additional funds are used to enhance learning opportunities for the pupils. Where leaders have been successful, for example with the nurture provision, they have not analysed the impact well enough.
- The leadership of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving. Leaders are becoming more skilled at accurately identifying individual needs and tracking the progress that pupils make. Through specific 'master class' training opportunities for support staff, adults are having a greater impact on the provision for individuals and small groups of pupils.
- Senior leaders are passionate for pupils to succeed and communicate the vision that 'tirelessly we provide all of our pupils the best education that we can'. Staff have performance management targets that focus robustly on making sure that pupils can make better progress.

- Owing to the many staff changes, many of the middle leaders are new. Senior staff are leading subjects, such as English and mathematics, with new teaching staff. Middle leaders are now receiving training but it is too soon to assess the impact of their work.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced overall, with many subjects linked together to make interesting topics. Pupils participate in additional visits, residential trips and special events to ensure that learning experiences are memorable. However, for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or for those who are most-able, adults do not tailor the learning activities in lessons well enough in subjects such as science, history or geography to meet individual needs.
- School leaders use the physical education and sport premium well to provide a good range of physical activities. Leaders have a clear plan for increasing the opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and enjoyment during lessons and in after-school activities.
- Leaders provide for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education well. Around the school, there is a wealth of evidence to show what pupils are learning and experiencing. Each morning, pupils recite their 'learning creed' so that they can reflect and commit to doing their best. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- Minutes of meetings show that governors have too often accepted the information presented without checking well enough the validity of the information. Consequently, results in 2016 for pupils at the end of key stage 2 were not anticipated.
- This year, governors are regularly checking the information from school leaders and holding them more stringently to account. Governors are increasingly effective and are more accurate about the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Governors have not ensured that the website is kept up to date. They have not ensured, for example, that information about the spending of the pupil premium meets current government guidance and is reviewed often enough.
- The knowledgeable chair of governors visits the school to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust and rigorous. He ensures that performance management targets are set and pay increases are awarded fairly and in line with school policies.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All statutory safeguarding requirements are currently in place. Staff are well trained and receive updates regularly from senior leaders. Governors ensure that all the necessary checks are completed when new members of staff are recruited.
- Safeguarding records are compliant and in good order.

- All staff are well trained in identifying concerns and know how to report these concerns appropriately. The designated staff for child protection work well with external organisations to ensure that appropriate action is taken. Evidence from case studies shows that child protection records are well maintained and action is followed up where necessary and in a timely manner.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe. The few parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, had mixed views about how well leaders keep their children safe and well cared for. Inspectors found no well-founded concerns regarding the way that staff care for pupils or with the physical environment at the time of the inspection.
- Pupils understand the different forms of bullying and show an appreciation of how distressing bullying can be. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves and others safe, including when using a range of technology. Work in pupils' books demonstrates that pupils consider safety regularly in lessons.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies across year groups and subjects. Work in pupils' books demonstrates that not enough teaching is interesting or well matched to pupils' skills and abilities.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics is inconsistent both across year groups and within classes. Often the work is too easy or too hard and expectations are not consistently high enough. At times, the most able pupils complete work that does not require a more complex approach or skill, particularly in lower key stage 2.
- The presentation of pupils' work varies and in some classes is very poor because adults do not routinely insist on the highest standard of work. Imprecise letter formation often goes unchecked in the feedback or support provided from adults. Adults do not model the formation of letters and numbers frequently or well enough. Consequently, pupils' handwriting skills are generally poorer than they should be for their age and ability.
- Although pupils write frequently using their daily log books and English books, the proportion of pupils who reached the higher standard in writing was well below that expected nationally at both key stage 1 and key stage 2 in 2016. Pupils produce individual pieces of writing across different genres, particularly non-fiction, but have few opportunities to meaningfully edit and re-draft their work to build their stamina and resilience in writing.
- Where teachers' subject knowledge is strong and expectations for learning clear, pupils settle quickly to their learning and produce work of an appropriate standard. Some pupils demonstrate secure levels of skills and understanding. In Year 6, for example, pupils are making good progress in developing their writing skills.
- The quality of teaching in subjects such as science, geography and history varies across the school. The most able and lower attaining pupils are often provided with work at the same level, which provides little opportunity for them to practise their skills or develop their fascination for learning at their own level.

- Time in lessons is used well. Adults follow the school's chosen curriculum and methods well, even when these are not as effective as they could be in raising attainment. The majority of pupils complete work promptly and follow instructions willingly.
- The teaching of early reading is systematic and effective. Adults question pupils well to ensure that they practise their sounds. Results in the Year 1 phonic screening check have risen over the previous two years, but are currently still below the national standard.
- Support staff are used increasingly well to have a positive impact on the progress pupils make. During the extended lesson time for the teaching of phonics, adults are deployed to instruct small groups of pupils. The staff have been well trained and typically ensure that pupils in key stage 1 make strong progress in reading.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Even though the vast majority of pupils are keen and motivated to learn, adults do not routinely develop pupils' thinking and reasoning skills. When asked questions, some pupils are reluctant to join in or to give more than one-word answers.
- Pupils do not routinely take pride in their work. Adults do not show younger pupils how to achieve the best quality of letter formation well enough. Where modelling does happen well, for example as seen in a Year 6 class, pupils respond well to the consistently high expectations and produce work in most subjects to the best of their capabilities.
- Pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to take risks in their learning to develop their resilience. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils.
- Pupils can identify people that they would be happy to speak with should they have a concern. Pupils told inspectors that adults would listen to their concerns.
- Pupils who attend the nurture group are cared for well. The pupils are encouraged to speak about the activities they enjoy best so they extend their vocabulary. During tea and toast time, pupils take turns and listen respectfully when others are speaking. The pupils are making strong social and personal progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Most pupils are polite, well mannered and respond well to the wealth of praise and rewards they receive. In their early morning dance, pupils are proud of the praise they receive for their efforts.
- Pupils conduct themselves well during the school day. They move around the school safely and well. Breaktimes and lunchtimes are positive social occasions and the dining hall is a calm and positive environment. Pupils use the large playgrounds well to devise games. They play energetically and appropriately for their age.

- When their teacher requests attention, pupils respond well and swiftly. In lessons, most pupils are motivated and keen to do well. Where teachers have well-established routines and consistently high expectations across the curriculum, pupils learn and cooperate well together.
- Pupils do their best even when the activities are dull or do not meet their needs well enough. In mathematics, for example, the most able pupils complete their calculations as well as they can, despite not being challenged enough to use and apply their skills in a range of ways.
- Attendance rates for groups of pupils remain strong. There are rigorous processes and procedures in place to deal with the few pupils who are persistently absent.
- Where school leaders have used exclusions as a last resort to improve behaviour, school records are well kept and all documents are in good order. School leaders have readily accepted inappropriate advice and guidance from the local authority about the alternative arrangements for pupils at risk of permanent exclusion.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, by the end of key stage 2, pupils have continued to make significantly less progress than other pupils nationally in mathematics. Although books indicate that, in Year 6, more pupils are now making accelerated progress, they still have much ground to catch up. The progress pupils make in mathematics varies in other year groups, especially in lower key stage 2, and is not consistently good.
- Published results from 2016 show that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics combined was lower than the national average at key stage 2. Pupils' progress in key stage 2 in 2016, in reading and mathematics, was significantly below the national average. Under the previous national accountability measure for schools, in 2015, the proportion of pupils who made expected progress in reading and mathematics was well below national averages.
- Currently, school assessment information demonstrates that the proportion of pupils making at least average progress has improved in Year 2 and Year 6. This academic year, more pupils are on track to achieve the age-related standard in all three subjects.
- In key stage 1, the progress pupils make from leaving Reception varies. In 2016, although pupils' attainment was broadly in line with national expectations for their age, some most-able pupils made insufficient progress. Not enough achieved greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils have not achieved as well as they should since the previous inspection. In 2016, disadvantaged pupils left the school with achievements in reading, writing and mathematics that were significantly below those of others nationally. The pupils were not prepared well enough for the academic challenges of the secondary school curriculum.
- Currently, through more robust tracking and monitoring in Year 2 and Year 6, disadvantaged pupils are making better progress in reading and mathematics.

- The progress that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make varies. In 2016, the pupils made significantly less progress than others in reading and mathematics. This academic year, leaders have identified pupils' needs more accurately and are improving the progress that the pupils make as a result.
- In 2016, although the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the phonic screening check in Year 1 was lower than the national average, it represented an increase on 2015. The teaching of phonics is suitably systematic. By the end of Year 2, nearly all pupils have reached the expected standards in the national phonic screening check.
- In science, the proportion of pupils who achieved the age-related standard was broadly in line with national averages at the end of key stage 2. Pupils' books illustrate that pupils' progress and provision in science vary across the school.

Early years provision

Good

- Children start their education well. From often lower starting points at the beginning of the Reception Year, children make good progress and rapid gains in their learning. In 2016, the proportion of children who left the early years having reached a good level of development was broadly in line with national expectations. This academic year, the proportion of children on track to reach a good level of development is above national expectations for their age.
- Children are confident and follow the routines and expectations well. They are sociable and welcoming. During the inspection, children shared their reading books with inspectors and were very proud to show how well they could write simple words such as 'bat'.
- From the evidence seen in children's learning journeys, the quality of teaching over time is good in the early years. Adults use the school's systematic approach to the teaching of early reading skills effectively so that children develop their skills well. Children are well prepared for the challenges of Year 1.
- Although children write frequently, adults do not routinely model handwriting skills well enough. Consequently, some children form letters and numbers incorrectly at this young age and are not developing good learning habits.
- The early years leader effectively tracks and monitors the progress that children make and adjusts the provision accordingly. This year, some children are set to exceed a good level of development in all areas. Adults are increasingly effective in raising both expectations and the quality of the provision so that children can excel.
- Adults plan children's learning well. They provide a suitably wide range of adult-led learning and independent times, so children can develop their own skills. Children persevere well with activities and listen very intently during structured lesson times.
- The learning environment is suitable and well equipped for children of this age. The outside area is particularly well designed so that children develop their physical skills, and have opportunities to practise their social skills and skills of imagination in the outdoor theatre.

School details

Unique reference number	138334
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	10026157

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	473
Appropriate authority	Gateway Learning Community Trust
Chair	Stuart Redford
Headteacher	Thom Martin
Telephone number	01375 489094
Website	www.theglc-primaryfreeschool.org.uk
Email address	admin.gatewayprimary@theglc.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website regarding the effective use of pupil premium, or information about what is taught in each subject of the curriculum. The website does not have a link to the Department for Education performance tables.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the use of the pupil premium or the curriculum.
- This school is larger than the average primary school and has grown significantly since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is above national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities at school support level is above national. An average proportion of pupils have an education, health and care plan.

- The vast majority of pupils speak English as their first language.
- The school has experienced a high turnover of teaching staff since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including observing learning in all classes, some of which were jointly seen with senior leaders.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils formally and informally.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' workbooks from a wide range of subjects, to take account of the work that has been done and the progress that groups of pupils make over time.
- The teaching of phonics was observed. Inspectors listened to a number of pupils read from Year 1 and Year 6.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, the chair of the governing body and leaders from the multi-academy trust.
- A meeting was held with representatives of the local authority to discuss provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- A meeting was held with senior members of the board of the Gateway Learning Community Trust.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation around child protection and scrutinised the recruitment checks made by school leaders when employing staff.
- The inspectors spoke informally with some parents to gather their views. Parents' views were considered from the 18 online responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, together with comments provided on the free-text service.
- The inspectors spoke to staff informally and took account of their views. There were no responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

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Wayne Harris	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Ginzler-Maher	Ofsted Inspector
Liz Kissane	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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