

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



6 February 2018

Mr Andre Rall  
Headteacher  
Theydon Bois Primary School  
Orchard Drive  
Theydon Bois  
Epping  
Essex  
CM16 7DH

Dear Mr Rall

### **Short inspection of Theydon Bois Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in January 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

There have been a number of leadership changes since the previous inspection. The former headteacher left the school in December 2013. A new headteacher was then appointed, who led the school from January 2014 until Easter 2017. The deputy headteacher 'kept the ship afloat' as acting headteacher until you took over at the beginning of this term. Governors have ensured that these changes have not had a detrimental impact on the quality of education provided by the school.

Theydon Bois is a lovely school. Pupils behave well and try hard. They are polite and friendly, and spoke with clarity and confidence to me during the inspection. Pupils show excellent attitudes to equality. For example, when talking to me about religions, pupils were very clear that 'you can't tell by looking at someone' what their beliefs are. They were equally clear that people should be judged on their personality and actions, not on their gender, skin colour or any other characteristics.

Almost all parents said that their children are happy at the school. For example, one parent said of her daughter that, 'She loves school, has strong friendships and the teaching is of a good standard.' Another parent said, 'Our child is very happy at this school and always speaks very highly of his teachers and the staff, including the dinner ladies.' During a telephone conversation with me, one parent described the school as having 'the biggest heart' with wonderful staff. She said that you, as the

new headteacher, have 'all the ingredients [you] need' to ensure that the school continues to go from strength to strength. Four out of five parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, said that they would recommend the school to others.

A small number of parents expressed dissatisfaction with, and concerns about, the school. For example, some of the parents who responded to Parent View said that they feel that the school is not well led and managed and that the school does not respond well to concerns that they raise. Others expressed concerns about the progress that pupils make. I am satisfied that these concerns are not indicative of wider issues with the leadership of the school. However, there is work to do to regain the confidence of this small group of parents.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The single central record of pre-employment checks is maintained well and meets statutory requirements. Good systems are in place to make sure that all the necessary checks are carried out in a timely fashion before new staff are allowed to take up their posts. Similarly, robust measures ensure the suitability of contractors and other visitors to the school before they are allowed access to the site.

Pupils said that they feel safe at school and almost all parents agree. Pupils said that there is little bullying and that, when it does occur, it is usually dealt with quickly by staff. Pupils said that Theydon Bois is a friendly school with nice teachers. Pupils described how you are already making a positive difference to the school and said that they like your 'firm but fair' manner.

### **Inspection findings**

- In order to check whether the school remains good, I followed a number of lines of enquiry. First, I looked at the school's current leadership and whether it is strong enough to ensure that the school continues to improve. I chose to look at this area because you are very new to the school and there was no substantive headteacher for two terms prior to this. In addition, the school's self-evaluation summary and improvement plan, kindly supplied to me before the inspection, indicated possible weaknesses in the quality of leadership.
- The school's self-evaluation is too simplistic and lacks appropriate analysis. Until now, leaders have not focused systematically enough on evaluating the impact of the actions that they have taken. Similarly, the school's improvement plan is underdeveloped. It does not link with leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and does not focus well enough on the most important priorities for development. Key features of strong improvement planning, such as milestones for development and smartly written success criteria, are missing.
- I am satisfied that the quality of leadership and management is strong enough to ensure that the school continues to improve. Despite being very early in your headship, you have already gained a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. We observed the quality of teaching and learning together and agreed on the strengths and areas for

development of what we saw.

- You are supported well by other leaders. The deputy headteacher gained valuable experience as acting headteacher prior to your appointment. This has been very useful in providing continuity of leadership and in enabling you to 'hit the ground running' from the beginning of this term. For example, in your first two weeks, you have already taken action to improve systems around safeguarding and attendance.
- The governing body is a strength of the school. Governors have a good range of skills, knowledge and experience. This enables them to carry out their duties well. For example, governors held firm to their high expectations when recruiting a new headteacher. They did not settle for making an appointment that did not meet their precise requirements in order to fill the vacancy quickly.
- The second area that I checked was whether current pupils are making good progress in writing. Results of the key stage 2 national assessments show that pupils' progress fell in 2017 and was well below the national average. The progress made by middle-attaining pupils has been well below the national average for the last three years. Published assessment information shows stronger outcomes in writing in key stage 1.
- The school's assessment information shows that current key stage 2 pupils are now making at least the expected amount of progress in writing. In some cases, pupils are making more rapid progress. However, there is variation in the quality of pupils' work. For example, some pupils' handwriting is much better developed than others', and their work is clearer and more neatly presented. You have already identified the teaching of handwriting as an issue that needs to be tackled and have started to take steps to address this. You and the other leaders know that there is some variability in the quality of teaching and that teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of are not always high enough.
- Leaders have been aware for some time that outcomes in writing are less strong than those in other subjects. Actions have been taken to improve pupils' writing but the impact of these actions is not clear. Leaders have not been systematic enough in their approach to improving writing. For example, they have not identified the precise issues to be tackled, then taken action, before analysing the success of the actions taken. This has slowed the progress in improving outcomes in writing. As a result, too few pupils are making rapid progress in the subject.
- I looked particularly closely at the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in writing, as well as in reading and mathematics. The very small number of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding means that published assessment information does not provide a clear picture of outcomes for this group of pupils. The school's assessment information shows clearly that the disadvantaged pupils currently attending the school are making similar progress to their classmates. You have already started a review to see whether there are any ways that spending of the pupil premium grant could be improved.
- Finally, I checked attendance. I selected this area because the most recent published attendance data showed that, although overall attendance compared well with the national average, the absence of pupils eligible for free school

meals, and pupils who have special educational needs support, was too high.

- You have already taken steps to improve attendance overall and for disadvantaged pupils specifically. For example, you are introducing a weekly award for good attendance and tightening the school's procedures for dealing with persistent absence. Few pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are frequently absent from school. It is clear that no groups of pupils are disadvantaged by low attendance.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- analyse the school's strengths and weaknesses fully, and use this information to plan improvements systematically, with clear milestones and measurable success criteria
- improve the teaching of writing, so that more pupils make rapid progress, by ensuring that teachers' expectations are always high enough and that handwriting is taught explicitly
- take reasonable steps to engage the small number of parents who are dissatisfied with the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other leaders and three governors. I met with a group of pupils and spoke with other pupils during the day. I took into account the 73 responses to Parent View and 67 free-text comments that were received. I spoke with one parent on the telephone. I took note of the 32 responses to the staff survey. I observed teaching and learning, jointly with you, and looked at pupils' exercise books. I looked at school documents including the single central record of pre-employment checks.