

Tithe Farm Primary School

Tithe Farm Road, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU5 5JB

Inspection dates

15–16 January 2019

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

- The headteacher, other leaders and governors have driven up standards since the previous inspection. Teaching, learning and the curriculum are now good.
- Pupils make strong progress from their varied starting points by the end of key stage 2, especially – but not exclusively – in reading. This includes disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils access an interesting, relevant and rich curriculum. They are enthused by the opportunities available to them, including the extra-curricular activities, residential trips and visits.
- Governors are effective in their roles. They have high aspirations for pupils in school and in the community. They provide the headteacher with effective challenge and support.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are a strength of the school. They are respectful and courteous to each other and adults and they make a significant contribution to the school's welcoming atmosphere.
- Leaders and staff are adept at supporting the most vulnerable pupils. Most notably, the work of the family support worker is effective in supporting pupils and families.
- Children get off to a good start in the well-managed early years classes. Adults work skilfully and sensitively with children, parents and carers, including those children who need support to catch up with their peers.
- Almost all staff, pupils and parents who took part in Ofsted's online surveys – and those spoken to during the inspection – were positive about the teaching and learning opportunities that the school provides.
- The headteacher and her staff have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through intensive monitoring and training. Even so, some teachers' knowledge is not as well developed as that of others.
- Leadership at all levels – including subject leadership – has improved considerably since the previous inspection. However, a few leaders are not yet evaluating the impact of their work precisely enough.
- Although standards have improved considerably, teachers are not yet ensuring that the most able pupils are receiving regular opportunities to reach the higher standards by the end of key stage 2.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment where pockets of less-effective practice remain by addressing weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge.
- Increase the challenge offered to the most able pupils in lessons so that more achieve the higher standards by the end of key stage 2.
- Ensure that all leaders – including those who are newer to post – are precise in evaluating the impact of their work in raising standards over time.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The widely respected headteacher joined the school following the previous inspection. Her work has been integral to developing senior leadership and governance within the school. Collectively, the headteacher, leaders and governors have driven up standards. They have ensured that there are high expectations that pupils are taught well and receive timely support when they require it.
- Senior leaders know the school well. School improvement plans are detailed and precise. They identify appropriate actions and address the areas for continuing improvement. Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are thorough, and teachers are given clear feedback on how to improve. This monitoring and planning support the effectiveness of the school's work and its success.
- All staff who responded to Ofsted's survey agreed that the school had improved since the last inspection. Staff are proud to work at the school and believe that they are well supported. They appreciate the good quality of professional development. The range of support on offer to staff is effective, well planned and linked to school priorities. For example, teachers' training on how to include practical equipment to reinforce learning in mathematics is improving the progress that pupils are making in the subject.
- Leaders and staff teams have created a broad and balanced curriculum and ensure that pupils learn well in a wide range of subjects. The school provides a wealth of experiences to enhance pupils' life experiences, including working with professional musicians, as well as trips to the theatre and the Brecon Beacons.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developing well. The school's caring and inclusive ethos ensures that pupils learn respect for one another. Assemblies explore differences, while upholding the uniqueness of every individual. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain, and the school responds to their interests. For example, teachers developed a package of lessons around pupils' emerging interest in Britain's role in the European Union.
- Teaching and learning in the early years are led and managed well. The early years lead has an accurate understanding of children's starting points, and the curriculum is well matched to children's needs and their level of development. This allows children to make good progress from their varied starting points.
- Leaders skilfully use additional funding to support disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils effectively. Leaders ensure that barriers to learning are identified, interventions put in place and funded activities are monitored. A significant portion of the funding provides well-tailored support from the family support worker. The school has also used funding to broaden pupils' life experiences, for example by providing the opportunity for pupils to learn a musical instrument and to participate in trips and events.
- Leaders are committed to meeting pupils' complex needs, and a range of

interventions are used to support them. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress from their starting points.

- Leaders make use of sports specialists to provide guidance and expertise that develop staff's skills and enthusiasm for teaching physical education (PE). Additional funding enables pupils to access a wide range of extra-curricular activities – including sports clubs – and these contribute well to pupils' health and PE skills. Monitoring of spending is now more robust and there is a clear rationale to priorities.
- Leadership at all levels has improved since the previous inspection. Senior and middle leaders are increasingly effective in their work. For example, English and mathematics leaders have ensured that new initiatives are well matched to pupils' needs and their impact reviewed regularly. Some leaders – including those newer to post – are not as precise when measuring the impact of their work. They have a mentor who helps them to develop within their roles and to add ongoing capacity to the work of current leaders.
- Leaders have identified parental engagement as a priority and have introduced a wealth of initiatives to include parents. Inspectors observed one of the school's regular curriculum-themed coffee mornings during the inspection. These well-attended events are for parents and pupils. Parents commented that these events enable them to better support their children with their work at home.
- The majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View – and those spoken to during the inspection – were positive about the changes introduced at the school. Most are very positive about the improved direction and progress of the school since the headteacher took up post. As one parent commented, 'Tithe Farm Primary is a school to be proud of. My children are happy and taught well.'

Governance of the school

- Governors make skilled use of the detailed information they receive about standards in school to ask precise, pertinent questions when they complete their own monitoring tasks. They challenge school leaders well, particularly about pupils' achievement and the impact of spending.
- Governors evaluate their effectiveness carefully and regularly reflect on their own skills and knowledge. They receive regular training so that they are well placed to carry out their roles and ensure that they have a balance of skills.
- Governors place a high priority on the safety and welfare of pupils. All governors have received safeguarding training and made it their business to check procedures are effective when they routinely visit the school.
- Governors ensure that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is allocated appropriately and has a positive impact on the progress pupils make.
- Governors have an accurate understanding of the progress made since the

previous inspection. They work effectively to support and challenge the headteacher and her team. They know where the school needs to improve further and recognise the importance of the role they will play in this process.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors ensure that there is a deep culture of safeguarding at the school. Regular training and updates ensure that staff are vigilant and alert to any possible signs or concerns. Consequently, adults know what to do if they have a concern about the well-being of a pupil.
- Leaders' accurate and detailed records demonstrate that pupils in need of help receive it in a timely way. The family support worker – alongside senior leaders – is an integral part of safeguarding at the school and is trusted by pupils, parents and staff. The school team works effectively with external agencies to liaise about pupils of all ages who need additional help and support.
- The school undertakes thorough checks on all adults working with pupils. The single central record of these checks meets all statutory requirements. Staff and governors – including those who are new – receive comprehensive training.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school, and most parents who completed the Parent View questionnaire agree. Pupils know who to talk to if they have a concern and are confident that action will be taken. Pupils told inspectors that they know how to stay safe when using the internet and that they trust staff to keep them safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers plan rich, varied experiences that engage pupils and stimulate their interest. They ensure that there is a real-life context to activities and that pupils are made aware of the links between subjects. This builds pupils' skills and deepens their knowledge.
- Most teachers use questions very effectively to promote pupils' understanding. Typically, they ask pupils to explain or develop their answers, both verbally and in their written work. This deepens pupils' learning and checks their understanding. Teachers routinely adapt their lessons to meet the emerging needs of pupils as the lesson progresses.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Teachers use their ongoing assessment of pupils to identify and support those who need additional help to catch up. Pupils are actively encouraged to use their phonics knowledge when writing independently. In reading, pupils sound out unfamiliar words independently so that they can successfully read a range of books and texts.
- Pupils read widely and are developing their enjoyment of books, both in school and at home. They read with expression and can talk enthusiastically about the texts they are reading. Pupils enjoy sharing books with their parents at home, and staff track pupils' progress closely. Where pupils find reading a challenge,

they are well supported by staff in school, particularly through high quality one-to-one support from specialist teachers of reading.

- Pupils are given numerous opportunities to write for a range of purposes. This helps them to develop their skills of composition, word choice and use of punctuation. Teachers model language well and encourage pupils to use correct terminology in class and in their books. Pupils are given the opportunity to apply these writing skills beyond English and mathematics through the school's 'creative curriculum' programme. In most cases, pupils take pride in their work and presentation is clear and legible.
- In mathematics, pupils select their own level of challenge and most pupils were ambitious in their choice, choosing to challenge themselves with harder questions. Teachers have created a culture where pupils are confident to take risks and to learn from their mistakes. When pupils provide answers, teachers challenge them to 'prove it' and to 'explain how you know'.
- Clear expectations regarding homework and reading regularly have ensured that the majority of pupils engage in learning outside of the school. Where pupils find this difficult, the school provides support for pupils to complete homework tasks or additional resources so that pupils can complete the work at home successfully.
- The majority of pupils are making good progress from their starting points, especially those from lower- and middle-attaining starting points. However, teachers and other adults do not routinely ensure that learning over time allows the most able pupils to reach the higher standards by the end of key stage 2.
- Most pupils typically access effective learning opportunities over time. However, sometimes, staff are not confident enough with the subject content to plan learning activities that capture pupils' interests and meet their needs. On these rare occasions, pupils tend to become distracted and exhibit low-level disengaged behaviours in different subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is a strength of the school. Pupils know that they will get help if they find something difficult or have a problem. They have confidence in staff to support them. In particular, the work of the family support worker in supporting pupils and their families when they require additional help is of high quality. Parents and pupils are appreciative of this support.
- Adults encourage a strong caring ethos across the school. Pupils care for and look after one another. Pupils say that they are taught to appreciate the importance of equality and to value different cultures and values. Consequently, they say it is easy to make friends, and most pupils are kind to one another.
- Pupils are proud to be members of the school community, and to be role models

for one another. School systems ensure that personal achievements are recognised quickly and pupils take pride in their own rewards and those of others. Pupils are particularly proud to have their learning skills recognised when they are awarded a school 'Learning Friend' award and become a 'Learning Superhero'.

- Pupils value the school building and their surroundings. There are clear routines and systems in place to structure the school day. As a result, pupils are clear about what is expected of them and most move around the school site maturely and sensibly. They play their part in being a responsible school citizen by throwing their rubbish in bins, taking turns, waiting patiently in lunch queues and putting away the large range of games and resources available to them at break and lunchtimes.
- Although most incidents and support for pupils are recorded well, some incidents are not recorded in as much detail as the best examples.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. Most are confident, articulate and keen to learn. They settle quickly when a new lesson begins. Most pupils demonstrate strong learning habits, from the early years through to key stage 2.
- Pupils are confident in the effectiveness and fairness of the well-embedded rewards and behaviour systems. They feel that poor behaviour is rare, and dealt with well by adults. Pupils can explain what they would do if they had a concern, and are confident that an adult would listen and act. As one pupil said, 'If we have a problem, we get help to sort it out.' Consequently, there are very few incidents of seriously negative behaviour or bullying.
- A significant strength of the school is the polite, well-mannered and welcoming nature of pupils in the school. Pupils are courteous to one another and to visitors and they enjoy the opportunity to talk about their learning.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Leaders monitor the attendance of all groups of pupils and individual pupils with care, and staff work supportively with parents to ensure that few pupils are disadvantaged by low attendance. Pupils appreciate that good attendance is recognised and rewarded. As a result, the attendance of all pupils – including different groups of pupils such as those from disadvantaged backgrounds – is above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress by the end of key stage 2 has been consistently in line with national averages. In 2018, it was above the national average for reading. The proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined was above the national average.
- Most notably, pupils from lower- and middle-attaining starting points made

strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. The school's own assessment information and pupils' books show that this strong picture of progress prevails for current pupils in Year 3 to Year 6.

- The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check has increased steadily and is above the national average. Effective teaching of groups and regular opportunities to use their phonics skills while reading and writing ensure that pupils' progress is good. Pupils who did not meet the expected standard are being well supported. Many of them have complex needs that require bespoke long-term support with reading.
- Overall, disadvantaged pupils make good progress because leaders' actions are addressing the barriers to their learning. However, progress for disadvantaged pupils starting from higher starting points is less secure.
- Pupils with SEND across the year groups make good progress from their starting points. Staff know pupils well and provide appropriate support. Teachers and adults make detailed plans for vulnerable pupils who have more complex needs and measure these pupils' progress from their varied starting points precisely.
- A significant number of children arrive at the school in Nursery and Reception classes in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language or with complex communication issues. These children are incredibly well supported as individuals in the early years so that they make strong progress. In particular, a high proportion of those who are in the early stages of learning English catch up with their peers by the end of Reception.
- For those pupils who need to catch up, leaders support their long-term progress well. For example, pupils who move into key stage 1 with the most complex communication challenges receive precise support for their specific needs, including speech and language specialist intervention. This means that – although some of these pupils do not achieve the expected standards in reading or writing by the end of key stage 1 – most do catch up with their peers when they move into key stage 2.
- Progress for those starting from higher starting points is less secure than for other pupils and below national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. This is confirmed by leaders' own assessment information and from a review of pupils' work. Leaders have begun to address this issue but it remains a focus for future work.
- Where teaching is most effective, pupils are provided with opportunities to develop skills across the curriculum. For example, pupils used laptops and tablet devices to research information about volcanoes before creating a poster as part of a geography topic.
- Leaders provide pupils with early ideas about careers, and work hard to raise their aspirations about further education and employment that are open to them beyond secondary school. Coupled with this, a rich, broad and balanced curriculum provides children with character-building activities – such as public speaking – and these skills are transferable into the next stage in their education. Achievements are recognised and celebrated publicly, and pupils

recognise each other's successes. Pupils are well prepared for their next stages, including their transition into secondary school.

Early years provision

Good

- The leadership of early years is effective, including the leadership of provision for two-year-olds. Home visits ensure that adults have a good understanding of every child's needs, enabling staff to meet the individual needs of children sooner. Effective arrangements for children's transition into school also help to create a strong partnership between home and school. Leaders make sure that all legal welfare requirements are met and that safeguarding is effective.
- A significant proportion of children in recent years have started school with weaker communication skills. School information and inspection evidence confirm that children who attend the school's Nursery are ready for learning in Reception and make good progress in the Reception Year.
- The early years environment is calm and orderly. This helps children to settle quickly and adopt the routines that develop skills of collaboration and cooperation.
- Adults support children's language acquisition and development effectively. The questions adults ask help children to develop their thinking. Staff are good role models and this enables children to repeat and rehearse words and phrases accurately.
- Children respond with enthusiasm to the different indoor and outdoor activities. There are opportunities for both adult-led and child-directed play. Children play and learn well together and are responsive to adult guidance. Resources reflect and value the diversity of children's home backgrounds.
- Parents are kept well informed of their child's progress and most are actively involved in their child's learning, for example contributing to their learning journal.
- Children are making good progress from their starting points. For example, in writing, there is a clear progression from mark-making to marks that convey meaning and subsequently to writing recognisable letters, simple words and phrases.
- Staff quickly identify when children face particular challenges and they respond with tailored support. For example, the nurture group supports children's emotional well-being and is having a positive impact on their progress. While these children may take longer to catch up with their peers, inspection evidence confirms that these children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes.

School details

Unique reference number	109585
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10057811

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Goodchild
Headteacher	Deborah Pargeter
Telephone number	01582 865 047
Website	www.tithefarmprimary.co.uk
Email address	d.pargeter@tithefarmprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 September 2016

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- Children in the early years are taught in a Reception class and a Nursery class. The Nursery takes two-year-old children only in the afternoon session.
- The headteacher joined the school in January 2017.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than in the average primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- No pupils access any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school. Some of these observations were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other leaders. Meetings were also held with representatives of the governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised work from across different key stages and subjects.
- A range of documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation, development plan, minutes of meetings, safeguarding records, pupils' progress information and school policies and procedures.
- Inspectors analysed 21 responses from Ofsted's online survey of parents, Parent View, including free-text commentary provided by some parents. Inspectors also spoke to some parents on the school site during the inspection.
- Inspectors analysed 31 responses to Ofsted's online survey of staff. Inspectors also spoke to staff throughout the two days of the inspection.
- There were 10 responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils. Inspectors spoke informally to pupils at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and in lessons. Inspectors also met formally with pupils to discuss their experiences of school.

Inspection team

Simon Eardley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Warboys	Ofsted Inspector
Lynsey Holzer	Ofsted Inspector

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