

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



12 May 2016

Mr Martyn Giddens
Headteacher
Bevendean Primary School
Heath Hill Avenue
Lower Bevendean
Brighton
East Sussex
BN2 4JP

Dear Mr Giddens

Short inspection of Bevendean Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 April 2016, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

Since your appointment in September 2015, you have rapidly established high expectations for the pupils and staff at Bevendean. With the support of a new deputy headteacher, who was appointed in January 2016, and able and enthusiastic senior leaders, you have ensured that what is best for pupils is your guiding principle.

Areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been effectively tackled. Learning has been restructured in key stage 1 to ensure that pupils have a clear purpose to their activities and teachers know how to assess pupils' progress accurately. Pupils build on the phonics (the sounds letters make) work from early years and, as a consequence, are better prepared for the transition into Year 2. Pupils now have ample opportunities to explore a wide range of cultures and beliefs, as well as discover what British values mean in the modern world. Pupils are sufficiently challenged and given opportunities to tackle demanding work that requires them to think deeply, because teachers are matching pupils' work to extend their learning.

The school is characterised by the care and support it offers pupils, academically and pastorally. The core values of the school, as identified by the staff on your arrival, are prominently displayed. Pupils are very well known and their individual needs catered for by teachers and support staff alike. Aspirations are high and the warm, family atmosphere supports pupils, as the school motto says, to 'succeed and

thrive'. Teachers and support staff alike find ways to offer pupils the extra encouragement or friendly smile to help them along.

A calm, orderly atmosphere pervades. Pupils are open, friendly and welcoming. They are keen to talk about their work and display a fierce pride in their school. Pupils told the inspector they had someone they could talk to if they had a concern. Pupils spoke very movingly of the support offered by learning mentors in the Rainbow Room (the school's quiet space). They behave very well at break and lunchtimes, getting on well together.

Parents are highly supportive of the school and some commented that their children could not wait to return to school after the holidays. Parents commented on how well their children are progressing. One said of her son, 'He comes home talking about the things he's learned, and I know that it's sticking.' You and other leaders have encouraged parents to become more involved in their children's education, for example by inviting them in to short teaching sessions. This is welcomed by parents. The active parent teacher association runs popular community events and helps the school fundraise for charity.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Meticulous records are kept and procedures followed assiduously. Governors regularly check the school's policies are working. Pupils are taught how to keep safe online and about cyber-bullying issues. Staff have been suitably trained and you have ensured that all staff are clear about their duties with regard to radicalisation and extremism. Staff are aware of what to look for in vulnerable pupils, and any who may be at risk. This is complemented by their detailed knowledge about each individual. The school site is safe, secure and inviting. Pupils are well supervised at break times.

Inspection findings

- You and the deputy head have complementary skills which means you work well as a team. You have ensured that the responsibility for the school's continued improvement is a shared one, with every member of the school community – staff, parents and pupils – having a role to play.
- Leaders are clear-sighted and accurate in their judgements about the school's strengths and areas for improvement. You have put in place appropriate plans to tackle weaknesses and sustain progress. You know where teaching is strongest and where improvements are needed.
- You have developed a cohesive system to assess pupils' progress and attainment, so that teachers have useful information to help them plan lessons to meet pupils' needs. A rigorous process of checking means you know these assessments are accurate.

- You have implemented a well thought out performance management process designed to support staff to develop and improve. Leaders have ensured that the progress of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, is at the heart of the policy.
- You skilfully managed the recent teacher vacancies in Year 6 and subsequent recruitment difficulties. You were able to draw on the strength of the staff team to ensure that these pupils are well supported in the final terms at Bevendean. Under difficult circumstances you held your nerve and made decisions which prioritised the pupils.
- Leaders have rightly focused on closing the gap for disadvantaged pupils. This is bearing fruit, and in many cases gaps have closed, for example in mathematics and reading. However, there is inconsistency in writing and in some classes disadvantaged pupils have not caught up with their peers.
- You have renewed the focus on pupils' attendance. This has brought about improvement and attendance is now in line with national averages. The importance of frequent attendance is appreciated by pupils because good attendance is celebrated with certificates and in assemblies. Nonetheless, despite stringent efforts, attendance is not consistently good for Traveller pupils.
- Teachers plan lessons effectively using the information they have about pupils to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Consideration is given to pupils' different starting points and activities are designed to help pupils progress. Learning mentors intervene quickly to help pupils make up lost ground. Teaching assistants are a real asset because they know how to support pupils and encourage pupils to work things out for themselves. The special educational needs coordinator plans learning carefully for pupils who have special educational needs or disability so that they make progress in line with their peers.
- The local authority provides a facility for deaf pupils on the school site, known as 'Launchpad'. Pupils make good progress here as a result of specialist teaching, as they do in the mainstream lessons where they are well integrated and supported. Leaders have promoted a culture of inclusion, underpinned at the core by an emphasis on communication, so that talk and signing are prominent features of day-to-day work in the school.
- Pupils in early years get off to a strong start, from starting points well below what is typical, developing their core skills well. During the inspection, pupils were thoroughly engaged in a series of challenges, such as cracking codes and building traps. Pupils were applying their wider knowledge to their tasks, and displayed obvious delight when they were successful.
- Teaching in mathematics ensures that pupils have a strong grasp of number and know how to apply their knowledge from one problem to solve another. They build on a known fact and can explain how this helps them to solve a question. This forms a strong base upon which pupils can tackle more demanding problem-solving activities.

- Teachers use questioning to further pupils' understanding and help them to develop more detailed explanations. This helps pupils to articulate what they know and strengthens their progress.
- Pupils are clear about how to improve their work because teachers use the school's preferred feedback method consistently in all key stages. As a result, pupils are confident in tackling the revision of their work under teachers' guidance. They take considerable pride in showing how they have improved.
- Relationships are strong and pupils appreciate the help and support they are given. Staff are prepared to go the extra mile, as illustrated by their willingness to help cover teacher vacancies in Year 6.
- Leaders have sustained a clear focus on the importance of good writing. This has been supported through the school's writing policy, building on the key idea, 'If you can speak it you can write it'. As a result of a consistent approach, pupils are increasingly confident and accurate writers. They develop the language they need to talk about their writing. For example, in Year 1, pupils were able to accurately identify and talk about the effect of using alliteration in their writing. However, some of the disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 are not making such secure progress. Leaders are aware of this and have added extra staffing to tackle this issue.
- A strong reading culture is promoted. At break and lunchtime, books are available for pupils to read outside and each classroom has a lively and attractive book corner, with tempting displays. There is a relentless focus on every pupil being a confident reader and specialist staff are used to help support those who need extra help in reading.
- Pupils' work is attractively displayed in the corridors and reflects the wide provision that has been made for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Pupils learn about their local community and environment, are involved in decision-making through the school council and explore different cultures through their work on the Chinese New Year, Diwali and Judaism.
- The governors are a knowledgeable and dedicated group who know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They have useful information about the school and use it astutely to hold the headteacher and other senior leaders to account.
- The local authority has provided helpful support and advice, pointing out areas for improvement, such as in the working environment in classrooms. Leaders have been quick to act on this and have also been keen to develop a closer working partnership with local schools.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the remaining gaps for disadvantaged pupils are closed in writing
- a continued focus on attendance means absence rates are low for all groups of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Helena Read
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited 10 lessons in the school, eight jointly with the headteacher and another senior leader. I spoke with pupils in lessons and looked at some of their work. I observed pupils at playtime and lunchtime. I met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, members of staff, a group of governors and the clerk to the governing body. I spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority. I considered the responses from members of staff and pupils to their confidential online questionnaires. I took careful account of 20 responses from parents. I looked at documents, including information about performance management and the quality of teaching, information about pupils' learning and progress, and minutes of meetings.