

Tree Tops Primary Academy

Brishing Lane, Park Wood, Maidstone, Kent ME15 9EZ

Inspection dates

3–4 May 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' progress, including progress for those who are disadvantaged, is inconsistent across the school. In key stage 1, too few pupils reach the standards expected for their age, particularly in phonics and mathematics. Younger pupils in key stage 2 make inconsistent progress.
- Recent positive changes to teaching and learning in the Nursery and early years have not yet fully secured better outcomes for children.
- Teaching does not challenge most-able pupils consistently well. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
- The support that teaching assistants provide does not develop pupils' knowledge and understanding consistently.
- The effectiveness of newly appointed subject leaders is not yet fully established.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, governors and the trust have a strong understanding of the school's effectiveness. Their recent actions are ensuring that the school is improving quickly.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. Pupils behave well and have good manners. They demonstrate a strong understanding of tolerance and respect.
- Good teaching in Year 5 and Year 6 ensures that most pupils catch up and make expected progress in a range of subjects by the end of key stage 2.
- The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to learn across a range of subjects. British values are promoted effectively.
- Safeguarding is effective. Systems to keep pupils safe are robust.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress.
- The pupil premium funding and sports premium funding are used to good effect.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management, by:
 - further developing subject coordinators' independent effectiveness to secure consistently good teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment to secure consistently good outcomes for pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, in all year groups, by ensuring that:
 - lessons and activities are appropriately paced and match pupils' needs effectively
 - lessons are suitably challenging so that a higher proportion of pupils are enabled to work at a greater depth
 - teachers identify and tackle pupils' misconceptions effectively
 - the support that teaching assistants provide moves pupils' learning forward consistently well
 - the Nursery and early years setting provides learning opportunities that are well matched to children's developing needs, and that teaching and activity time here are used to maximum effect.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The recently appointed principal has brought fresh vigour to leading improvement. She works effectively with the capable senior leaders who provide her with high-quality support. The strong contribution made by the executive principal and vice-principal has ensured that, recently, progress against the school's development plan has accelerated securely.
- Leaders know the academy's strengths and weaknesses well. They have a strong understanding of what needs to be done to ensure that pupils' outcomes improve. Leaders, including governors and leaders of the academy trust, have the highest aspirations for all pupils to achieve well. They are ambitious to make Tree Tops a good school and are, therefore, acutely aware that there is still more to do to achieve this.
- Leaders provide staff with good-quality professional development and there is a strong emphasis on regular coaching and mentoring to help improve teaching. The vice principal provides particularly good support for developing teachers and supporting those new to the profession. Leaders' determined challenge and support ensure that teaching is improving rapidly.
- The special educational needs coordinator ensures that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the good-quality specialist help they need to achieve well. Leaders track carefully the progress that these pupils make and provide tailored provision to ensure that they make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders have recently enhanced how they assess and monitor pupils' progress. They use this information increasingly sharply to work with teachers to improve pupils' learning. However, leaders know that this work is still developing, and teaching does not yet match pupils' needs consistently well.
- Subject coordinators typically have good subject knowledge and work with dedication and vigour. That said, some are currently new in post and are still developing their leadership capabilities. Senior leaders know that developing subject coordinators' ability to work more independently is a priority for successful ongoing school improvement.
- Leaders ensure that the pupil premium funding is spent effectively. Leaders have high aspirations for disadvantaged pupils and put this additional funding to good use. For example, the family liaison officer is building strong links with parents. Where appropriate, she provides families with the extra support they need to help pupils attend school regularly. As a result, the current attendance rate of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, is improving quickly, supporting their achievement.
- Funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used appropriately. Leaders work well with parents and other professionals to identify the needs of individual pupils. Effective additional support, such as speech and language intervention, is provided to meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points.

- Leaders ensure that the sports premium funding provides pupils with high-quality games and physical education lessons. It also funds effective staff training to improve teachers' skills in teaching sport. Pupils enjoy additional activities such as swimming and karate. Consequently, pupils develop healthy lifestyles.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders have taken particular care to ensure that it provides pupils with quality life experiences. For example, in enriching music provision, leaders provided opportunities for pupils to work with professional musicians, participate in a new school choir, and attend a national singing event in London. Extra-curricular clubs enable pupils to learn new skills such as gardening and eco-awareness. As a result, pupils are able to demonstrate effective skills in a range of subjects.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development and British values are promoted effectively throughout the curriculum. Pupils know what racism is, and understand that it is wrong. They show tolerance of different faiths and religions because they learn about them well as part of the trust's global learning project. They understand what homophobia is and know that it is unacceptable. As one pupil said, 'It's nobody's business to judge anyone else.' Leaders' work ensures that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The trust provides effective support that is helping improve pupils' outcomes. Its rigorous support and appropriate challenge hold leaders strongly to account. Through effective training and recruitment, the academy trust has strengthened governance successfully.
- Most parents who spoke with inspectors and responded to Ofsted's questionnaire hold the school in good regard. As one stated, 'Since being at Tree Tops my son has discovered his love for school and learning.'

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school well. They monitor the work of leaders with sufficient rigour and provide good challenge to champion pupils' outcomes. They have a clear understanding of pupils' achievements, including those pupils who are disadvantaged. They know that the pupil premium funding is spent well. As a result of their careful scrutiny, governors fulfil their statutory accountabilities well.
- Governors work well with the academy trust. For example, they use best practice from other academies within the trust to effectively improve provision at Tree Tops. Governors readily accept training opportunities provided to them and show commitment to continually improve their own effectiveness.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that robust systems are in place to keep children safe. Records are detailed, accurate and of a high quality. Thorough checks are made when recruiting staff, and leaders record these in line with statutory requirements. The trust regularly checks safeguarding systems at Tree Tops.
- All staff receive regular training and up-to-date information regarding safeguarding. For example, the 'safeguarding wall' in the staff room ensures that all information

regarding how the school keeps children safe is readily available. Staff are clear about these processes. When questioned by inspectors about how to keep children safe, staff knew the school's expectations and what to do.

- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Older pupils learn about road safety by completing helpful Bikeability sessions. Younger pupils know that the gates and fences at school keep them safe. All pupils have good knowledge of e-safety and know not to share personal information online. Leaders provide a wealth of additional information for parents and pupils regarding this important aspect of safeguarding on the school website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. There is some effective practice in particular years, but good teaching is not yet typical throughout the school. For example, some teachers do not pick up pupils' misconceptions quickly enough. As a result, not enough pupils are making consistently good progress as they move through the school.
- Teachers' aspirations for what pupils can achieve are sometimes not high enough. Pupils, particularly the most able, do not consistently produce enough work at an appropriate depth of understanding and are not always challenged appropriately. Consequently, not all pupils learn well, and some most-able pupils do not make strong progress.
- Not all teaching is well matched to pupils' needs. Teachers are beginning to use assessment information more effectively but learning opportunities are not consistently well planned to ensure that all pupils make good progress. As a result, some pupils are not achieving as well as they could in all year groups.
- The pace of learning in lessons is variable. Some teaching is appropriately paced and, as a result, pupils make good progress. For example, in one Year 5 lesson pupils completed a range of activities that challenged them successfully to develop their knowledge of persuasive language. However, this strength in teaching is not consistent, and sometimes activities are too undemanding. As a result, lesson time is not always used well to ensure that pupils progress well.
- The support that classroom teaching assistants provide does not consistently have a positive impact on pupils' learning. At times, they are not successful in developing pupils' knowledge and understanding sufficiently.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive effective specialist support to make good progress. For example, the speech and language assistant provides high-quality support to develop pupils' language and communication skills. As a result, these pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Effective teaching across the wider curriculum provides rich opportunities for pupils to learn across a range of subjects. In art, the whole school has been learning about the work of the artist Samuel John Peploe. The work that pupils completed in recreating his artwork as a mural is commendable.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson pupils were able to develop their ability to solve more complex sums because the

teacher's explanations were simple and precise. Consequently, pupils were able to quickly progress to solving difficult mathematical problems independently.

- Good teaching ensures that pupils learn effectively about British values. For example, older pupils have recently met with local councillors to discuss and debate the responsibilities that come with growing up. Pupils have also met with magistrates to explore the rule of law. These wider opportunities ensure that pupils are ready for life in modern Britain.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils understand what bullying is. They state that it happens rarely at Tree Tops and that when it does, teachers manage it well. Pupils were keen to tell inspectors about their recent assemblies on racism, and the posters they had made to demonstrate the hurtful effect it has on others. As a result, leaders are successfully developing pupils' positive attitudes.
- There are lots of opportunities for pupils to learn about safety. Regular visits from the local police inform pupils how to stay safe in the holidays. Recently, the whole school practised how to evacuate the building quickly and safely. Both pupils and parents are confident that the school helps pupils to keep safe.
- Pupils are respectful of each other's right to learn. Pupils say that very occasionally poor behaviour disrupts others but staff are swift to resolve this when it happens.
- Leaders provide helpful support for pupils when moving up to secondary school. Pupils meet their new teachers in the summer term and familiarise themselves with the new challenges they face. Particular care is given to ensure that pupils, including the most vulnerable, have the confidence to make a successful start in the next stage of their education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Recent changes to promoting good behaviour and raising expectations have proved successful. Pupils are enthused by the new 'dojo' reward system and work hard to win points for their class. They are regularly rewarded for good behaviour with celebration assemblies, certificates and awards. For example, the Year 5 pupils relished the special assembly held to celebrate their recent success in a national writing competition.
- Most pupils behave well in class and enjoy learning. They settle quickly to work and show respect to their class teachers and other adults. They enjoy the challenge that some lessons present and work hard as a result. They are equally respectful of each other's views. For example, in Year 5 mathematics lesson they listened attentively to other pupils as they shared ways of solving difficult division calculations.

- Pupils' attendance is similar to the national average. Vulnerable pupils are supported well to attend regularly. As a result, no groups of pupils are disadvantaged by poor attendance. Persistent absence is improving considerably. Concerted efforts made by senior leaders are supporting families to help pupils attend school regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Across year groups, the progress of current pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, in reading, writing and mathematics is inconsistent.
- Pupils do not make typically strong progress in some year groups. However, most pupils make accelerated progress in Year 5 and Year 6 because teaching is more precisely matched to their needs. By the end of key stage 2, the majority of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, catch up and achieve similarly to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In the 2016 key stage 1 national assessments, pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics was below the national average. The progress of current pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, is not yet typically strong.
- In recent years, the number of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics has risen considerably but still remains below the national average. In the 2016 phonics screening assessment, more pupils achieved the expected standard, but this proportion remained below that seen nationally. Recent helpful changes have been made to the way phonics is taught and school information shows that pupils are achieving much better. However, this improvement has yet to be reflected in national assessments.
- Pupils who have special educational needs, including those who are disadvantaged, are supported well to make good progress from their starting points. The recent changes to how leaders identify pupils who need extra support ensure that provision is targeted more effectively. As a result, these pupils are enabled to catch up well.
- In a range of subjects, the most able pupils typically make expected progress. That said, the proportion of these pupils working at a greater depth is not high enough. Across year groups, teaching is not consistently challenging this group of pupils to make accelerated progress.
- In most year groups, pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Last year, most pupils at the end of key stage 2 made progress in reading, writing and mathematics that was broadly average.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- For the last three years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been below the national average. Not enough children leave the early years well prepared for Year 1. However, the newly appointed early years leader has recently made important changes to improve teaching and learning. School information suggests that, as a result, current children are making stronger progress. Leaders

acknowledge that it is still too early to accurately demonstrate the full impact of this work, and know that more needs to be done to secure good outcomes for all children.

- The quality of teaching is variable in the early years. Some adults miss opportunities to interact with children to extend their learning. However, some teaching meets children's needs precisely. For example, a teacher taught children the mathematical meaning of 'equals' through skilful questioning and appropriate use of effective resources. As a result, the children developed good confidence in their ability to correctly match different sets of identical numbers.
- Not all learning time is used effectively. Some children flit between different activities because adults do not routinely ensure that children remain focused on what they are doing. Other children lose interest in tasks before learning sessions finish, such as before break or lunchtime. As a result, not all children make the progress of which they are capable.
- Children learn how to keep safe in the early years. Adults successfully ensure that children follow routines appropriately. Children come in from play calmly and orderly. They put their coats away on pegs and store their outside shoes tidily in the right place. They know that they have to wash their hands before snacktime to 'wash the germs away'.
- A few children do not understand how they are expected to behave. For example, sometimes children shout out repeatedly to gain attention. Not all adults uphold consistently high expectations of children's behaviour.

School details

Unique reference number	137882
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10032873

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	222
Appropriate authority	Leigh Academies Trust
Chair	Mr Robert Findlay
Principal	Mrs Steph Guthrie
Telephone number	01622 754888
Website	www.treetopsprimaryacademy.org.uk
Email address	contactus@treetopsprimaryacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 March 2015

Information about this school

- Tree Tops is an average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are White British and others come from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is also above average.
- Tree Tops Primary Academy is part of the Leigh Academies Trust.
- In 2016, the school did not meet the government's floor standards (minimum standards for pupils' achievement at the end of key stage 2).
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes, spoke to pupils, looked at work in their exercise books, and heard them read. Observations were conducted jointly with the principal and vice-principal.
- Meetings were held with the principal and executive principal, senior leaders, middle leaders, a group of pupils, four members of the governing body, and the chief executive officer of the Leigh Academies Trust.
- Inspectors spoke to parents on the playground and took into account 11 responses, including written comments, to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- A range of documents were reviewed, including the school's development plan and leaders' self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness, information about pupils' achievement, governing body and trust reports, and records concerning pupils' attendance, behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

Dom Cook, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Becky Greenhalgh

Ofsted Inspector

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