

The Fitch Green Academy

Tanton Road, Little Dunmow, Dunmow, Essex CM6 3GG

Inspection dates

6–7 March 2018

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders, ably led by the headteacher, have ensured that pupils continue to receive a good quality of education.
- They have established a positive culture of high expectations.
- Governors strike a happy balance between challenge and support for the headteacher and senior staff. In doing so, governors make a meaningful contribution to school improvement.
- Staff work effectively as a team and are proud to be part of the 'Fitch Green family'.
- There is little difference in the progress of disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and others.
- Teachers set suitably challenging work for most pupils most of the time because they use assessment information well. This means that pupils currently in the school are making strong progress.
- Teaching assistants are a strength of the school. They are highly effective in supporting pupils to make strong progress.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well. This contributes to their sense of safety.
- In most lessons, teachers make learning interesting. This means that pupils are often engrossed in their work and they make good gains in their learning in lessons and over time.
- Pupils benefit from a strong focus on citizenship and life skills education within the curriculum. Together, these contribute to pupils' good personal development and prepare them well for the future.
- Provision for the early years is good and, consequently, children thrive on rich and vibrant experiences.
- Most-able pupils are not challenged consistently well enough to make sure that they reach their potential.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable the most able pupils to make the best progress they can by making sure that all teachers have the depth of subject knowledge they need to stretch and challenge them.
- Embed the work on sharing the key features of the most effective teaching in the school to all teachers to eradicate the few remaining inconsistencies.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher sets a very positive tone and has established a culture where teamwork is strong. His expectations of himself, the staff and the pupils are high and this means that he is uncompromising in his ambition for what the pupils and staff can achieve. He is very well supported by the deputy headteacher. He communicates his vision well to the staff, who are resoundingly proud to be members of the school community. Most feel that the school is well led and managed.
- Members of staff who have responsibility for leading subjects are passionate and highly committed to their work. Those who have recently taken up responsibility for leading subjects are working hard to make sure they carry out their role effectively.
- Teachers who are new to the profession are unreservedly positive about the support they receive from colleagues. They readily cite improvements they have made to their teaching as a result of support from their mentors and senior staff. Leaders have begun to share most effective practice across the teaching team and this has led to some improvements in teaching. The vast majority of other staff value their training because it is tailored to their needs and, hence, it has a positive impact on the work they are doing with pupils.
- The headteacher uses performance management effectively to eradicate ineffective teaching.
- Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have accurately evaluated the effectiveness of their work. Improvement planning is robust and focuses on appropriate priorities.
- Leaders shared with the inspection team the extensive work they have done since 2015 to address the dip in standards in mathematics. Leaders introduced a creative approach to the teaching of mathematics but this did not have the outcome they wanted. As a result, the subject leader attended training and carried out an audit of the quality of mathematics teaching at the time. Leaders then carried out research to help them decide what would be the school's preferred way of teaching mathematics and trialled the approach in one year group. The impact was positive. Slowly but surely, they rolled the approach out across the rest of the school and, although it has taken some time, the progress pupils make in mathematics is now much more rapid than previously and is strong.
- Pupils enjoy the exciting curriculum and benefit from the carefully planned 'experiences'. 'Challenge time' allows pupils to practise skills they have covered in lessons. The skills they develop in 'challenge time' are monitored effectively in an app. Leaders monitor the curriculum effectively and this means that it evolves to meet the changing needs of pupils. Leaders have put in place a manageable system for assessing subjects other than English and mathematics.
- The citizenship curriculum is highly effective in promoting fundamental British values. It prepares pupils for life in modern Britain because it is tailored to the context of the school. Recent work on diversity included a celebration of difference, of abilities and disabilities and some of the cultures represented in the school. Pupils readily discuss

diversity among themselves and enjoy the links which the curriculum makes with current affairs.

- There is a good range of clubs to support the formal curriculum. These include sports, music, drama and construction. Regular trips further enhance the curriculum.
- Most parents and carers are positive about the school. They feel that it is well led and managed and they speak highly of the teachers. They are well informed about how well their children are doing at the school and they are pleased with the progress their children make.
- A small number of parents are dissatisfied with the frequent changes in staffing, for example as a result of teachers moving to promoted posts. Leaders acknowledge the changes but feel that staffing is more settled now. A very small number of parents are concerned about behaviour in lessons but, based on the evidence gathered during the inspection, the inspection team cannot validate this concern.
- The local authority has been instrumental in confirming the impact of the school's work on improving outcomes in mathematics.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is ably led by the chair and co-vice-chairs of governors who have made sure that governor skills have been taken into account when recruiting new colleagues. The chair of governors is also the chair of the board of trustees and this ensures continuity between the two bodies.
- Governors know the school well as a result of their regular visits and this means that they have a realistic view of its strengths and weaknesses. They revisit the school's priorities for improvement regularly to make sure there is no slippage. They have worked effectively with other leaders to review and revisit the vision for the school.
- Governors are supportive of leaders but do not shy away from challenging them when needed. For example, when leaders were deciding which approach to take to the teaching of mathematics, governors questioned them thoroughly about the rationale for their suggestion.
- Governors make sure that additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is well spent. The physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is also exceptionally well spent because it has led to an increase in participation. In addition, the teaching of PE is very effective.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The culture in the school is one of vigilance, where caring for pupils and keeping them safe is part of everyone's job.
- Staff have been well trained to spot patterns in changes of behaviour which might indicate that pupils are at risk. They know how important it is to maintain thorough

and robust records of any concerns and they know that they must refer concerns to the senior safeguarding leads in the school.

- The safeguarding leads follow up referrals to external agencies tenaciously.
- Governors make regular and thorough checks on the school's systems for keeping pupils safe. They accept this as one of their most important responsibilities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Adults have established very good relationships with pupils and, as a result, pupils respond with immediacy to any requests adults make of them.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of what pupils can do and, in many cases, they plan effectively to stretch and challenge them. They set tasks at appropriate levels of difficulty for different groups of pupils. However, some of the most able pupils in the school are not well enough challenged and so their learning time is not maximised. Teachers do not move them on quickly enough to more challenging tasks and this places a ceiling on their learning.
- Teaching assistants are a strength of the school. They apply school policies such as calculation and 'stem sentences' faithfully and ask high-quality questions such as 'How do you know?' and 'What else could you say about that?' to confirm and stretch pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teaching assistants' knowledge of how pupils learn is secure. This means that they are well placed to reword questions for pupils who do not understand a concept in the first instance and to challenge pupils who readily grasp key learning points.
- In mathematics, pupils grapple with strategies to solve problems and this builds their resilience. They use apparatus appropriately to support them when carrying out problem-solving tasks. They manipulate numbers effectively. They have embraced wholeheartedly the school's preferred approach to teaching mathematics. They know that concrete experiences and pictorial representation help them to work through abstract tasks teachers set them.
- Where teachers' subject knowledge is strong, they make precise checks on pupils' understanding and this means that pupils go on to make strong progress. For example, in a PE lesson, the teacher watched closely while pupils attempted forward rolls. Where they struggled, she picked out the specific barrier and showed them how to overcome it. As a result, all pupils made good gains in their understanding of using their core strength to enable them to do forward rolls successfully.
- The teaching of reading is good. High-quality phonics teaching enables the youngest pupils to read unknown words and to tackle challenges from teachers to write simple sentences using these words. Older pupils read with expression and understanding. They are skilled at reading beyond the literal and in recognising how authors draw readers into their books.
- Pupils who struggle with learning and most-able pupils are not given enough opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English.
- Teachers apply the school's feedback policy well overall. However, in key stage 2, they do not apply the policy by ensuring that pupils routinely respond to their feedback.

- Assessment across the various subjects is developing well. It is embedded for English and mathematics. Teachers understand the new system for assessing other subjects and have made a good start on using it.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and they enjoy their lessons. They are keen to learn and try their best. They take pride in their work. This is clear from the neat presentation in their books and on displays round the school.
- Pupils get on well with each other. They are developing their social skills effectively.
- The breakfast club gives pupils a safe and healthy start to the day.
- Pupils are developing effective understanding of other cultures through the input from parents of different cultures. Values such as democracy are taught well through the citizenship curriculum.
- The 'school parliament' makes a positive impact on the pupils' personal development because its members aim to improve 'the school, the community and the world'. Pupils who serve on the parliament liaise with other pupils who do not currently have this opportunity so that their views are taken into account.
- Pupils are safe at school. They feel safe and their parents agree that this is true. Pupils are taught effectively about how to keep themselves safe. They say they are confident that they can get help from an adult if they need to. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online but sometimes the younger pupils confuse 'blocking friends' with 'not being friends with' people they do not know.
- Bullying incidents and incidents of racism and discriminatory behaviour are rare. Pupils are confident that staff will deal with these well should they occur.
- Leaders have identified that transition from early years to key stage 1 is not as effective as it could be and have put in place a new system for the summer term.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good and often exemplary.
- Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and usually make the correct choice about how they will behave. This contributes to the strong progress they make. Very occasionally, in key stage 2 when girls are waiting for the next activity from the teacher, they do not behave as well as they might.
- On the odd occasion where pupils are being supervised solely by a member of the non-teaching staff, there is low-level disruption and this indicates that some pupils are not yet taking responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Pupils are polite and helpful. They readily engage in conversations with adults.

- As a result of leaders' rigorous approach, attendance for the different groups of pupils has improved recently and is now average. Persistent absence has decreased and this means that fewer pupils are at risk through missing education. The inspection team scrutinised some striking examples of improvement in attendance for identified pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- When pupils begin at the school, their starting points are typical for their age except in the areas of speaking and personal, social and emotional development. They get off to a good start and pupils currently in the school go on to make good progress in their knowledge and application of phonics and in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have made sure that all teacher assessments of pupil progress have been moderated in the school and externally so that they are accurate. Pupils are currently making strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and in most classes a good proportion are making very strong progress. Given that the teaching of mathematics is now of a high quality, this means that the low outcomes in mathematics in 2017 look set to be eradicated in 2018 and beyond.
- Across the classes, pupil progress overall is more rapid in reading, writing and mathematics than previously. However, some of the most able pupils are not making consistently strong progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are making strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There are examples where pupils have caught up significantly because teachers and teaching assistants have identified gaps in previous learning and have supported pupils to close them.
- In subjects such as PE and science, good numbers of pupils are making very strong progress and are exceeding the expected standard for their age.
- In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of children who reached a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year exceeded the national average. In 2016, the proportion of pupils who reached the Year 1 phonics screening expectations was in line with the national average and above in 2017.
- Attainment in 2016 for pupils working at the expected standard was in line with national figures for key stage 1 in reading and above in writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils working at the higher standard was below average in reading and average in writing and mathematics.
- In key stage 2 in 2016, attainment was average in reading, writing and mathematics although the proportion of pupils who reached the higher standard was below the national figure.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils in key stage 1 who reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was average, and above average for those working at the higher standard.
- Pupils currently in Year 2 and Year 6 are working at the expected standard with good numbers on track to be working above the expected standard by the end of the year.

Early years provision

Good

- From starting points which are typical for their age, children go on to make strong progress across the areas of learning. This is because of the rich and vibrant environment which caters well for every child. Children choose from a wide range of activities when they are not working with an adult. Boys and girls are equally well focused on activities which help them with their reading, writing and mathematics and this means that there is no difference between what boys and girls achieve.
- Adults work extremely well together to plan learning opportunities which encourage the children to make strong progress across the areas of learning. Adults routinely adapt what they have planned to meet the interests of the children.
- Children are independent in their learning and the well-organised resources, such as information books, support this independence.
- The leader is well placed to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the early years because she has put in place a continuous cycle of monitoring. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher to make sure that monitoring is accurate and robust.
- She makes sure that adults effectively challenge the most able children and support those who find learning difficult.
- Children behave exceptionally well. There is strong evidence of a highly nurturing culture. All welfare requirements are met and children are safe.
- Reading is taught well overall but some of the children who struggle are not encouraged to use their knowledge of sounds well enough.
- Processes to make sure that children make a successful transition into Year 1 are not as effective as they might be.

School details

Unique reference number	136441
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10037643

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	264
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Richard Barrett
Principal	Nathan Lowe
Telephone number	01371 822330
Website	www.theflitchgreenacademy.co.uk
Email address	admin@flitchgreen.net
Date of previous inspection	30 April–1 May 2014

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school which is oversubscribed in some year groups.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school at other than the usual times is average.
- Only a very small number of pupils are supported by the pupil premium.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities who are supported through special educational needs support or with an education, health and care plan is below average.
- No pupils are educated off-site or through alternative provision.
- The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school club that are managed by the governing body.

- The school shares a site with a private pre-school. This is inspected separately.
- In 2017, the school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in a series of lesson observations and learning walks across all classes and in different subjects in order to inform judgements about teaching, learning and assessment. Some of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders. They also met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, action plans and the school development plan, school policies, pupils' progress information, attendance data and a wide range of pupils' work. They heard some pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding documentation.
- They spoke informally with parents at the start of the inspection and took note of their views through the 119 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, which included a number of free-text responses. Inspectors also analysed the school's own parental survey information.
- They spoke formally to groups of pupils. They also talked to pupils in lessons about their work and spoke informally to pupils on the playground and at lunchtime and breaktimes.

Inspection team

Helen Jones, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Nutman	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Carter-Tufnell	Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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