

Loose Primary School

Loose Road, Maidstone, Kent ME15 9UW

Inspection dates

16–17 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Pupils are great ambassadors for their outstanding school. 'I couldn't be happier with my child's progress, not only academically but also as a young person that cares for others, aims high and has big dreams about the future that is waiting.'
- This comment by a parent, which was typical of many, correctly describes the culture created in the school that ensures that pupils become well-rounded, confident and aspirational individuals who develop a love of learning and excellent personal skills.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership for the school. He is unwavering and uncompromising in his determination to provide the best possible learning and personal experiences for pupils. Everyone in the school community subscribes to the vision enshrined in the school that 'Potential is Limitless'.
- Leaders, including governors, share clear vision and ambition and very high expectations and aspirations for all. There is a substantial investment made in staff development, which helps to spot and unlock potential.
- Children make outstanding progress in the early years because the quality of teaching and learning is excellent. They settle exceptionally well into school life.
- Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers make learning interesting, challenging and fun.
- Pupils throughout the school make consistently rapid progress. Standards achieved are above average in the Year 1 phonics screening check and at the end of key stages 1 and 2.
- All groups, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, achieve equally well across a range of subjects.
- Pupils feel safe in school and they are well looked after. Individual needs are carefully identified and supported.
- Pupils' exemplary behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning contribute significantly to their outstanding achievement. There is further scope for the school to use these attributes and provide opportunities for pupils to achieve even more.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's work. One parent echoed the views of many with the comment, 'The governors, headteacher and all staff deserve a massive thank you for the efforts they have put in and they should be very proud with the knowledge that they have improved the life chances of so many children.'

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Look for further opportunities to challenge pupils further, making even greater use of their hunger for learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership for the school. He is extremely well supported by the deputy headteacher, senior leadership team, other leaders, governors and all staff. They share the vision to strive for excellence in all of the school's work. Expectations of staff and pupils are very high.
- A large number of parents, who had children at the predecessor schools, commented very positively on the changes since the amalgamation, and in particular the work of the headteacher. One wrote, 'The headteacher has transformed this school. It has a renewed energy that radiates positivity and a sense of family.'
- Leaders and teachers reflect continually upon their work as a highly motivated team looking to make constant improvements in the pursuit of excellence. Staff morale is very high. Staff told inspectors that they are inspired, as well as professionally challenged, by the culture that prevails in the school. This is demonstrated by the extremely positive responses to the online staff survey.
- High-quality professional development makes an excellent contribution to the quality of teaching and learning and leadership. Senior leaders identify individual talents and potential. They provide highly effective support and guidance, giving staff opportunities to develop, excel and become effective leaders.
- Leaders at all levels are influential and make an exceptionally strong contribution. Agreed systems for monitoring, and shared high expectations, are consistent across the school and ensure that all pupils benefit from equally excellent experiences.
- Everyone in the school understands the key priorities for further improvement. This includes the pupils. Members of the school council conducted their own evaluation of the effectiveness of the school.
- Leaders' checks on all aspects of the school's performance are incisive and enable whole-school priorities to be correctly identified and improvements achieved. Rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement mean that any support that is needed for pupils and teachers is rapid and effective.
- Pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most-able, is used effectively. Robust systems are in place to ensure that needs are identified quickly and extra support is provided where appropriate to help pupils overcome any barriers they face in their learning. Differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are diminishing, and in some instances have reversed.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport funding is also used effectively to enhance the school's existing strong provision. The funding is spent in a range of ways, including the use of specialist PE teachers, additional opportunities in a range of sports, increased participation in after-school clubs and competitive sports. These activities enhance the skills of pupils and teachers and therefore improve outcomes for pupils.
- The rich and exciting curriculum has a notable impact on pupils' motivation, enthusiasm, thirst for learning and their outstanding personal skills. It is strongly underpinned by

pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. One parent wrote: 'The range of learning opportunities including external speakers, visits, theme days and curriculum-based activities inspire learning and extend far beyond the classroom.'

- Learning is enriched by a wealth of extra activities including visits, visitors to school and a range of clubs. These activities help pupils to learn new skills and make a significant contribution to their personal as well as their academic development.
- Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain because all staff and pupils promote and demonstrate fundamental British values in all areas across the school. Pupils have a strong sense of community and understand the need for rules within the school and the wider society.
- Respect and tolerance are fostered extremely effectively through staff emphasis on the school's values and the subjects taught. Pupils learn about, and celebrate, different religions and cultures. In their questionnaire, all pupils agreed that the school encourages them to respect people from other backgrounds and to treat everyone equally. Equal opportunities are promoted exceptionally well and pupils learn without fear of discrimination of any type.
- The school is outward-looking and senior leaders constantly seek to keep staff up to date and their ideas fresh through research and external expertise. The local authority works very effectively with the school and directs others to visit in order to share and observe the school's outstanding practice.

Governance of the school

- The governors have a wide range of skills and experience and make a strong contribution to the strategic direction of the school. They use their expertise exceptionally well to support and challenge leaders and staff. They hold leaders to account very effectively for the school's performance.
- Governors share the ambition and aspirations of the headteacher and senior leaders and have taken effective action to support leaders in driving school improvement to ensure the highest outcomes for all pupils.
- Governors are exceptionally well informed by senior leaders and their own monitoring work, which is linked tightly to whole-school priorities. They know in detail the school's strengths and what the school needs to do next.
- Governors ensure that pupil premium funding is used appropriately and is making a difference for pupils because they keep a close check on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. They know how the primary PE and sport funding is spent but are less aware of the impact on outcomes for pupils.
- Governors ensure that all statutory responsibilities are met, including those relating to safeguarding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and governors check that all staff receive the required training to protect children and keep them safe. The school policies are reviewed regularly so they are up to date and comply with the latest guidance and requirements.
- There is a clear culture of safeguarding in the school. All staff are aware of their

responsibilities for keeping pupils safe and leaders ensure that they are vigilant in doing so. The safety and well-being of pupils are very high priorities and there are secure systems for making sure that staff, governors and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

- Rigorous systems and procedures are in place and record-keeping of any concerns or referrals to outside agencies are well organised. Relationships with parents and external agencies are positive and supportive to ensure that pupils quickly get any help they may need.
- Pupils, parents and staff strongly believe that pupils are safe in school. One parent wrote, 'I feel my children are safe as the school has robust safeguarding processes in place.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- As a result of outstanding teaching, pupils' achieve exceptionally well in all areas of the curriculum. Teachers' expectations and aspirations for pupils' learning and behaviour are very high.
- Teachers provide lessons that capture the interest and imagination of pupils so that they are highly motivated and engage extremely well in learning.
- Excellent relationships between staff and pupils mean that pupils work hard and want to do well. They become resilient learners, are confident to try out new ideas and work together very well. They thrive in the positive, 'can do' culture that all adults promote exceptionally well.
- Teachers link learning across different subjects to make it purposeful and relevant for pupils. The use of core texts, chosen to fit in with the theme for the term, spark pupils' enthusiasm. This introduces pupils to good-quality books as well as developing comprehension skills as they explore aspects of the texts. Pupils in Year 2, for example, thoroughly enjoyed exploring the properties of materials in science. They investigated which materials would make the best trainers for 'Traction Man', from their current core text. They made excellent progress in their comprehension skills as well as in their scientific knowledge.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together in a culture of mutual support and strong teamwork. They work together to make sure that all pupils are fully included. As a consequence, disadvantaged pupils, the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive very effective targeted support when needed, so that they all make similar rapid progress.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are confident to probe and extend pupils' understanding. They know what pupils already understand, can do and need to learn next. They are very skilled in asking questions in order to do this and to pick up on any misunderstandings during lessons, providing more support or extra challenge when necessary.
- Pupils take great pride in their work, which is demonstrated by the high standard of presentation in their books and the quality of the displays of their work around the school. Teachers are excellent role models for pupils in all that they do.

- The school's policy for marking and feedback is used consistently across the school. Pupils said that teachers' comments help them know how to improve their work. They, like their teachers, are reflective on their learning. They develop valuable and competent skills in assessing how well they are doing through evaluating their own and others' learning. Teachers provide pupils with excellent models of learning so that pupils have a very clear idea of what successful work of a high quality looks like.
- The most able pupils receive a high level of challenge through the tasks teachers set. Because 'Potential is Limitless', many pupils of all abilities exceed national expectations as they are not constrained by any set limits as to how much teachers expect from them.
- In the current year, the teaching of reading is a focus for the school as leaders correctly identified that pupils' achievement in reading was not quite as strong as it was in writing and mathematics. The success of the actions taken is strongly evident in the reading skills of current pupils. Pupils enjoy reading and are immersed in good-quality and challenging texts. Their rich reading experiences in school promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well, for example through developing empathy with characters and exploring moral dilemmas.
- A love of reading is forged right from the start of school. Reading at home is strongly supported and encouraged. Phonics is taught very skilfully and younger pupils use their phonics skills well to help them read and write. Older pupils read with fluency and confidence and can talk about their favourite authors and styles of writing, giving considered and mature reasons for their views. Pupils make very good progress in using skills of comprehension and inference. A group of pupils agreed with one who said, 'The more I read, the better I am at writing, because I know what keeps the reader interested and wanting to turn the page to find out what happens next.'
- Pupils are encouraged to be actively involved in making decisions, expressing their views and initiating their own learning. Given pupils' outstanding personal skills, behaviour and attitudes towards learning, there is scope, which senior leaders have correctly identified, to increase and extend these opportunities throughout the school and across the curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school is a safe, well-ordered environment where pupils feel valued and respected. Pupils say that they are very happy and that they love school. They are rightly extremely proud of their school and the part they play in making it a special place. Pupils have high expectations about their own achievement and want to do their best. Their attitudes to learning are outstanding.
- There are excellent relationships between pupils and teachers. All staff know the pupils well and as a consequence, individual needs are supported very effectively. Parents agree that their children feel safe in school and are well looked after. Parents are extremely positive about the high levels of individual care and support. One parent

wrote, 'The pastoral care is outstanding and has been a key factor in my child's emotional and intellectual progress.'

- Pupils play an exceptional role in their school and have a real influence on its work. They relish the responsibilities they have and take them very seriously. For example, the eco council members are influential in promoting energy-saving and recycling across the school, and digital leaders actively champion online safety. Peer mediators are trained and valued by other pupils.
- Pupils and parents express a strong sense of belonging to a community. One parent's comment was typical of many: 'My children love the school and have made many friends as have we as parents. Quite simply, it is a fantastic school which we as a family are proud to be a part of.'
- The school values are well known and promoted very strongly by pupils. They are caring and thoughtful about the needs of others. One parent wrote: 'The school's values are clearly a priority and are evident in all they do. This became clear to me on a recent occasion when my child fell over on his way out of school and an older child, who he did not know, stopped to check that he was okay.' Another commented, 'As well as a focus on doing well academically, the school teaches the children valuable life lessons, such as positive thinking, compassion and respecting others.'
- Pupils say that they feel very safe in school and know how to keep safe in a range of situations in and out of school. They say that any bullying is rare. They are confident to turn to teachers and other adults if they have any concerns or problems, knowing that they will be listened to and teachers will sort things out quickly and fairly. Pupils understand the difference between bullying and friends falling out or being unkind.
- The 'families and community' manager makes a very effective contribution to supporting pupils and their families who may be vulnerable, to help remove or reduce barriers to learning.
- Pupils who attend the breakfast or after-school club receive a safe, healthy and sociable start or end to the school day.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. School records confirm that behaviour is excellent over time and has improved for individuals.
- Pupils conduct themselves in an exemplary fashion in the playground, at lunchtimes and around the school. They are well mannered and welcoming to visitors, often holding open doors and enquiring if they could help the inspectors find their way to different classes.
- Pupils are very clear about what is expected and understand the behaviour system and the rewards and sanctions. They strive to get to the top of the 'behaviour ladders' in their classes.
- Pupils are polite, friendly, kind and considerate. Behaviour in lessons is exceptional and they consistently live up to the high expectations set in class by staff. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and each other.
- Pupils, staff and parents agree that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved. A parent wrote, 'The headteacher has done a brilliant job with the school, instilling good manners and morals and generally encouraging the children to be better people as well as making sure they know they can achieve anything.'
- Attendance has improved and is above average. Leaders are particularly diligent in

their work to reduce the gap in attendance between the disadvantaged pupil group and others.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- The school's information and work in pupils' books show that pupils currently in the school make strong progress throughout each key stage and achieve exceptionally well. This is seen in a wide range of subjects, including science, art, computing and PE, as well as reading, writing and mathematics.
- Inspectors were extremely impressed with the very high standards of pupils' artwork and writing displayed around the school and in classes. The quality of pupils' work was inspiring and reflected the richness of the curriculum that links learning in a meaningful way across subjects.
- In 2015 the proportion of pupils who reached the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 was significantly above that found nationally. The proportion that reached the higher levels at both key stages was significantly above average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. By Year 6, all groups made at least the expected and often more rapid progress from their starting points.
- In the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2015, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard was above the national average. In 2016 it improved even further because of excellent teaching of phonics skills.
- It is not possible to compare directly the achievement information for 2015 and 2016 because of changes to the expectations and systems for assessment. By the end of Year 2 in 2016, however, the proportion of pupils who reached and exceeded the expected standard was above that found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' progress by the end of Year 6 was above average in mathematics and particularly strong in writing, where it was in the top 5% of all schools. The proportion that reached and exceeded the expected standard was above average – again, being particularly strong in writing. The strengths in writing are a result of a whole-school focus on the subject and strong leadership. Pupils have far more opportunities to write across the curriculum and their exposure to good-quality texts has had a positive impact on their writing achievements.
- Teaching and learning in mathematics has focused on mastery and mathematical reasoning. Pupils work very well together to explain their thinking and learning and are challenged exceptionally well to develop depth, knowledge and understanding.
- Outcomes were not quite as strong in reading by the end of Year 6 and leaders continue to take rapid action to address this. The impact on pupils' reading achievement is already evident, particularly for boys who were lagging behind girls. Pupils currently in the school are making rapid progress and demonstrating high standards in reading.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to others because barriers to learning are reduced by a successful range of strategies, including additional support for individuals and weekly mentoring by their class teacher. Extra support is given to meet their well-

being, social and emotional needs where appropriate, which has a positive impact on their learning. The attainment of the relatively small number of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in 2015 and 2016 was lower compared to all pupils nationally but these differences are rapidly diminishing for pupils currently in the school.

- The few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve very well because they receive tailored support that helps them make the best possible progress from their starting points.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, are challenged exceptionally well and as a result, make outstanding progress. They rapidly gain in confidence and set their own high expectations. They, like other pupils, demonstrate a determination to persevere and deepen their understanding and extend their thinking.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children start in the early years with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age. They make excellent progress during the Reception Year. In 2015, the proportion of children that reached a good level of development was well above average and in 2016 it was even higher. Children are extremely well prepared to continue their learning in Year 1. One parent wrote, 'Such is the motivation for reading that my child's abilities have surpassed our expectations even within the first few weeks of school.'
- The leadership of the early years is outstanding and there is a relentless drive to further improve outcomes for the children. This has been evident in the complete redesign of the outdoor area, which now provides children with opportunities to learn and play and develop skills in all areas of learning. The classrooms are attractive and well organised to provide rich experiences.
- The passion and ambition of the leadership is shared with the highly effective early years team. Leaders' high expectations for children and staff mean that the quality of provision is rigorously and regularly monitored to see what might be improved. Currently, improving boys' writing is a focus because even though boys are doing better than boys nationally, their writing skills when they start are not as strong as those of girls nationally.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively to identify and support the individual needs of a small number of disadvantaged children. As a result they make equally excellent progress and achieve at least as well as other children.
- Staff ensure that safeguarding and welfare requirements appropriate to this age group are fully met and there are high levels of care. Children are kept safe in school and learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy. One child was overheard saying, 'I've painted so I'd better wash my hands.' Staff are friendly and welcoming and so children are happy and settle calmly into the routines of the day. A parent wrote of her child that 'He runs through the door every day smiling.'
- Behaviour is excellent. Children learn together very well and cooperate and share in the classrooms and the outdoor areas. They show kindness and respect for adults, themselves and others.
- Staff assessment of children's progress is precise and informs future learning. The

provision is extremely well planned, with the children's interests always at the centre of their learning.

- Teaching is outstanding. Staff expectations are high and children are challenged very well. The activities provided for them are exciting and interesting and spark children's curiosity and imagination. As a result, children are highly motivated, really enjoy their time at school and demonstrate a high level of involvement and engagement.
- Early numeracy and literacy skills, including phonics skills, are taught very effectively. Skilled questioning helps to develop children's language as well as their thinking and reasoning skills. Children quickly develop a love of books and could talk with great enthusiasm about the story of 'Owl babies', which was the core text. Children were completely absorbed in making a small brick house for an owl and showed great determination and resilience when their tall towers fell down. 'Oh well, I'll just have to start again,' said one.
- There are very good procedures to get to know the children and their families before they start at school. Continuing highly positive relationships with parents ensure that they can work in partnership with the school to support their children's learning. One parent commented, 'The transition between the pre-school and the primary school was done in a fantastic way...which made the change really easy and as stress-free as possible.'

School details

Unique reference number	141075
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10019921

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	655
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Hardy
Headteacher	Darren Webb
Telephone number	01622 743577
Website	www.loose-primary.kent.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@loose-primary.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. There are three classes in each year group.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium funding is below average.
- Children attend full time in the Reception classes.
- The school provides daily breakfast and after-school clubs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The primary school was formed on 1 September 2014 following the amalgamation of

the previous Loose Infant and Loose Junior schools. The headteacher was appointed to lead the new primary school.

- The school is a partner school in the Mid Kent Learning Alliance, which is a group of teaching schools. It is also the lead mathematics hub primary school for the area. The school collaborates, shares and develops expertise with a group of other local primary schools and the headteacher provides support for other headteachers. The local authority promotes the work of the school as a role model for others.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes during 34 lessons. Most of these observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher or other senior leaders. Inspectors also conducted learning walks with the headteacher in both of the school buildings.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their work and looked at work in pupils' books with senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed pupils at playtime and lunchtime and asked them for their views on the school. They also talked to pupils about reading and listened to some pupils read.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, governors, the local authority improvement adviser, other staff with key leadership responsibilities and members of the school council.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including: the school's own check on its performance and the quality of teaching; the school improvement plan; information on pupils' progress; and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- The inspectors looked at the 151 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 99 written comments, and spoke to some parents at the start of the day. They also took account of 58 questionnaires returned by staff and 262 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

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Andrew Hogarth	Ofsted Inspector

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