**University of Cambridge Primary School**  
Eddington Avenue, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB3 0QZ

**Inspection dates**  
20–21 June 2018

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**Summary of key findings for parents and pupils**

**This is an outstanding school**

- The headteacher provides inspirational, inclusive leadership. His vision and values are reflected in the relentless pursuit of excellence across the work of the whole school team.

- Governors are highly committed and skilful. They use their impressive range of expertise very effectively to support leaders and in holding them to account for the school’s performance.

- The bold, ambitious and knowledge-rich curriculum empowers pupils of all ages to learn, to question, to discuss and to challenge ideas across a broad range of subjects.

- High-quality, innovative, research-based teaching leads to a trajectory of improving outcomes and builds secure foundations for pupils’ future learning.

- Teachers plan exciting activities in a stimulating environment. Pupils are encouraged to aim high. They are willing to try hard and know that they can learn from their mistakes.

- Very effective teaching in Reception is coupled with well-considered opportunities for playful enquiry. As a result, children become resilient, confident and independent learners who are well prepared for Year 1.

- Leaders are working to ensure that children have as many opportunities to practise their mathematics skills, through play and in other areas of learning, as they do in writing.

- Strong phonics teaching ensures that children get off to a good start with their reading. A love of reading is very well promoted across the school.

- The school’s core values are firmly rooted in pupils’ outstanding behaviour, regular attendance and exemplary attitudes to learning.

- Pupils’ safety is of the highest priority. Staff are well trained and vigilant in protecting them from harm.

- Almost all parents and carers are highly positive about the school. Leaders know that there is more to do to improve communications with the few whose views are not entirely positive.
Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the mechanisms for leaders and governors to communicate with parents to ensure an increasingly consistent understanding of the values and ethos of the school.

- Ensure that children in the early years have as many opportunities to practise their skills in mathematics, across the areas of learning, as they do in practising their writing.
Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management  Outstanding

- From its opening in 2015, the headteacher has led the school with a tenacious, yet compassionate, determination to ensure that all pupils succeed, whatever their starting points.

- Leaders at all levels, including governors, are relentless in their pursuit of high-quality learning experiences for pupils across every aspect of the exceptionally well-considered curriculum. Leaders know that these unwaveringly high expectations contributed to some early staffing turbulence when the school opened, which has now settled.

- Teachers, teaching assistants and the wider-school workforce are proud to be part of the school. Working together, they make an impressive contribution to a well-established journey of continual improvement. The headteacher’s words were a testament to this when he said, ‘We will never be the finished article.’

- Evaluation and review processes are accurate, detailed and thorough. Decision-making, both in the classroom and at senior leadership level, is based on expert research into successful learning. Collaborative working in school, with the university and with an increasing number of other schools, locally, nationally and internationally ensures that good practice is widely shared across a flourishing learning community.

- Throughout the school, there is a strong sense of professionalism. The headteacher and senior leaders model high expectations through team teaching and ‘drop-ins’. Teachers’ development, including the headteacher and senior leaders, is based on a well-regarded ‘lesson study’ approach which invites peer support as well as a critical review of their work.

- Classrooms are welcoming, open spaces without doors. This means that, as one staff member stated in a positive way, ‘There is no hiding place.’ Consequently, swift action is taken through coaching and expert interventions to address any relative weaknesses in teaching, learning, systems or procedures.

- Leaders encourage teachers to take risks in designing stimulating learning experiences. This results in a ‘can do’ attitude which is mirrored in the universal willingness of pupils to challenge themselves to ‘give it a go’.

- Teaching staff speak highly of the reforms introduced by senior leaders, in planning, marking and assessment, which they say help them to focus on the aspects that will have most impact on pupils’ learning. Individual lesson plans, for example, have been replaced with interactive flip charts identifying key lesson features, so that more time can be spent on planning high-quality sequences of learning and exciting resources.

- In their responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, all staff strongly agreed that leaders do all they can to ensure that the school has a motivated, respected and effective teaching team. The regular, externally led well-being sessions for all staff are appreciated and valued.

- The range of continuing professional development, including for teaching assistants and the wider-school workforce, is impressive. The school team has a wealth of internal and external expertise to draw on. This is because senior leaders have made
the most of every opportunity for partnership working to support aspects such as the moderation of assessment judgements and the development of specialist subject knowledge for teaching.

- A consistently strong focus on staff participation in educational research, in particular into developing pupils’ reading, writing and mathematical skills, is as effective in enriching teachers’ work as it is in enhancing pupils’ learning. On more than one occasion during the inspection, staff told inspectors that they had learned more in the relatively short time that they had been in this school than they had ‘in 10 years of previous teaching’.

- Regular placement opportunities are offered for trainee teachers, through well-established links with the University of Cambridge’s faculty of education and other teacher training providers. In their conversations with inspectors, trainee teachers were effusive about the high quality of their school-based experience and the significant contribution that it had made to their teaching practice as a result.

- The school’s research-informed curriculum is ambitious, innovative and inclusive. It aims to ‘Develop compassionate citizens in a positive social climate of high expectations.’ In doing so, it challenges pupils very effectively to achieve well. The model is held together by three ‘golden threads’: habits of mind, oracy and dialogue, and playful enquiry.

- These threads are clearly evident across all aspects of school life. Inspectors noted this work in action in lessons, in displays, in assemblies, at break and lunchtimes and in pupils’ books. They also heard it in the routine conversations that they had with pupils, as well as witnessing it in the conversations that pupils had with each other and with school staff.

- The extensive range of enrichment opportunities enables children to thrive in areas of particular interest. The Friday enrichment clubs, run by teaching assistants and the headteacher, are seen as a highlight of the week. Impressively, over 82% of pupils in the school take part in extra-curricular sports. Reading for pleasure is actively encouraged across the whole-school community through book clubs, not just for pupils but also for parents and school staff.

- The themes and topics through which children learn are designed to cover the national curriculum expectations in a speech and language-rich environment. A wealth of information about pupils’ learning is shared with parents on the school’s website. Parents are regularly invited into school to share and to hear about their children’s work.

- A wide range of interesting and typically exciting activities are carefully planned across different subjects. In one example, Year 4 pupils told inspectors about how they had recently found out about life on a research ship from members of the British Antarctic research team who hosted a series of workshops in the school.

- The exceptionally broad and balanced programme includes challenges through forest school, where pupils learn outdoors in a woodland area, music and daily singing, age-appropriate philosophy, sports, art, drama, history, geography and computing. Pupils’ opportunities for creative writing across subjects are extensive and celebrated on classroom walls.

- Provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The well-established programme, which is at the heart of the curriculum, ensures that
pupils understand religious and cultural diversity and individual differences. The British values of, for example, tolerance, respect and democracy are securely rooted in the foundations of the day-to-day life and ethos of the school.

- The vast majority of parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school’s work and would recommend it to others. In their conversations with inspectors they had a great deal to say about the high-quality provision, the caring, nurturing environment and the extent of the progress their children are making, across all aspects of their learning. As one parent said, echoing the views of many, ‘I never cease to be amazed at how much my child seems to know and the mature way she approaches problems and works things out for herself.’ Another supported this view in saying, ‘My children love going to school and bubble over with what they have been learning.’

- Nevertheless, senior leaders and governors recognise that there is more to be done to address the concerns of a minority of parents who feel that communication links need to be strengthened further. For example, the occasional parental concern related to the extent of the information that they said they received about pupils’ progress or the ‘no packed lunches’ model associated with the school’s ‘family’ dining approach. However, these issues did not resonate with most other parents’ views.

- In a few other responses, a small number of parents challenged the effectiveness of the school’s homework policy. While published information directs parents to a range of activities to support pupils’ learning at home through the school’s website, some of them feel that homework should be more formalised.

- In responding to this concern, senior leaders are considering a different homework model for upper key stage 2 pupils as the current Year 4 pupils become Year 5 in September. These plans are, as yet, in the early stages of development. They will form part of senior leaders’ reflections on improvement planning for the new academic year.

Governance of the school

- The skilful team of governors is highly effective. They are experts in their own professional fields. They use their extensive skills exceptionally well in providing challenge and support across the whole school team.

- All governors are regular visitors to the school and so they are very clear about what is working well and what needs to improve.

- Together with senior leaders, they leave no stone unturned in ensuring the realisation of their commitment to the provision of outstanding education for the University of Cambridge Primary School pupils.

- Where action is needed, governors act swiftly to ensure that changes are implemented and that they are making a difference. They are suitably demanding in ensuring that available funds are spent wisely, always with a pupil-centred focus, including the pupil premium, additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and the primary sports funding.

- Governors are not complacent about the quality of their own performance. They are as thorough in challenging themselves to do better as they are in challenging school leaders.
In reviewing their work, governors have developed their own operational plan. Recent appointments have strengthened the team further, establishing an even greater level of challenge to ensure that the running of the school stays on track.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding is at the heart of daily life in the school. Pupils feel safe and well cared for. The overwhelming majority of parents agree. In their discussions with inspectors, some of them readily shared their stories of how leaders have helped them and their children through difficult times.

Meticulous safer recruitment practices are in place. Child protection training for all staff is systematically updated. Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at every meeting, including in weekly staff briefings.

Senior leaders and governors are scrupulous in ensuring that systems and procedures are compliant and that any aspects of concern are followed up quickly. When concerns are raised, precise actions and outcomes are tracked thoroughly. Routine monitoring, including by governors and the headteacher, ensures that information is checked to ensure that it is accurate and if anything else needs to be done.

Staff provide high-quality support for vulnerable pupils in a nurturing environment and so typically these pupils make excellent progress. The welfare and care of all pupils is of paramount importance. When necessary, referrals are made to external agencies for additional support. Nothing is left to chance in ensuring that the pupils’ best interests are served as a matter of routine.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

High-quality teaching is underpinned by a climate of high expectations and is typified by strong progress, across the key stages and in a wide range of subjects, including in English, mathematics and science. Classrooms are stimulating, fun and exciting places to learn. Consequently, pupils, including children in their Reception Year, are eager to find out for themselves and curious about the topics they are taught. It came as no surprise to inspectors when pupils told them how much they love coming to school.

Pupils are regularly challenged to achieve their best, through carefully planned activities and teachers’ skilful questioning. Consequently, they are guided effectively to extend and deepen their learning.

Across all aspects of their work, pupils are very well supported to consolidate and master key knowledge and skills. Lessons are rich in the specialist language of the subjects being taught.

The teaching team, including teaching assistants, is a self-critical professional community. Its unrelenting focus on continual improvement and shared good practice is crystal clear. The systematic, coaching-centred ‘lesson study’ approaches are highly successful in helping staff to refine their practice.
Teachers make excellent use of research evidence to inform their planning decisions, alongside regular learning conversations with subject specialists and across the whole-school community. As a result, teaching staff know what effective teaching looks like, what is working well, the things that they need to improve and how to go about making those improvements.

Support from experts from local employers and the parent community, as well as expertise from further afield and the university, includes, for example, historians, drama specialists, an expert in polar habitats and a wide range of professionals from industry, as well as from education. Teachers explained to inspectors how this brings learning to life. They were very clear about how the experience is as exciting for them as it is for their pupils.

The whole-school assessment approach to teachers’ use of ‘responsive teaching’ log books is well established and effective. Information about individuals and groups of pupils’ progress is recorded during the course of a lesson. This enables teachers, working together with teaching assistants, to adapt their planning in ‘real’ time and to plan for pupils’ future learning systematically, based on secure foundations of knowledge and understanding.

School staff know their pupils and their learning needs exceptionally well and so pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and, in particular, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, often make remarkable progress.

The school-designed assessment and tracking system is detailed and thorough. Regular progress meetings ensure that information is shared. Any required interventions are put in place quickly to keep pupils on track. All staff are held to account for pupils’ outcomes in team meetings and through the range of assessment information that is scrutinised by senior leaders and governors.

Teachers’ assessments are comprehensively moderated using internal expertise and shared moderation networking arrangements with other schools to check the accuracy of judgements.

Phonics teaching is compelling and very successful. Pupils become confident and fluent readers. They are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants to read widely and often, including for pleasure. Year 3 pupils spoke avidly about the stories that their teacher reads to them and how he has inspired them to read more books by the same author. The school’s senior teaching assistant is an impressive champion of the joy of reading.

Creative writing opportunities are captured in every subject. Classroom walls reflect a celebration of pupils’ progress and their growing confidence across each key stage. Teachers are working hard to help older pupils to develop a more consistent style of handwriting by the end of key stage 2.

Teaching in mathematics is very effective. Many pupils are proficient in applying their reasoning skills. They can relate mathematics very well to real-life situations and to other subjects, for example in using population data in geography, using logic to solve problems in English and in using geometric shapes to build a bridge in design and technology. While this model is established in key stages 1 and 2, leaders know that it is at an earlier stage of development in the early years.
Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils speak exceptionally positively about their school. The vast majority demonstrate exemplary attitudes to learning and are rightly proud of their work. Pupils develop confidence and enjoy having visitors in their lessons. Inspectors were delighted by children in Reception classes who confidently asked them, ‘Would you like to see my learning?’
- Pupils are typically well motivated and curious about what they are doing. They understand what it takes to be successful both in school and in their daily lives. Older pupils act as role models, readily taking on extra responsibilities, such as playground ambassadors.
- In another example, a group of Year 4 boys were justifiably proud of the success of their lunchtime computer club. They explained to inspectors how they set the club up to help build younger pupils’ confidence and skills in using technology. Their professionalism as they coached others was inspiring.
- The school’s core values of empathy, respect, trust, courage and gratitude are reflected in pupils’ collaborative working and in the caring approaches that they adopt with each other, with visitors and with all staff. Consequently, the environment is a warm and friendly place to learn. Pupils meant it when they told inspectors, ‘Everyone is welcome here.’
- Leaders do not shy away from tackling complex social matters and diversity in an age-appropriate way. Related activities are well managed through assemblies, personal, social and health education sessions and project work. For example, a recent, nationally funded project involved pupils, together with the wider community in raising awareness of different types of relationships, in particular aimed at the prevention of homophobic bullying. In another example, older pupils maturely debated women’s rights and then wrote and produced their own video, ‘Stand up for women!’
- In this nurturing setting, most pupils, including in Reception, are quick to become resilient, independent learners. They feel happy and safe in their school, with an inherent trust in staff to deal with any problems, should they arise. Almost all parents are overwhelmingly positive about this aspect of the school’s work.
- School staff work hard to ensure that pupils understand the different types of bullying, including when online. Dedicated e-safety days for pupils, workshops for parents and the school’s computing curriculum combine to build a shared understanding of how to stay safe when using technology.
- Pupils were very clear, in their discussions with inspectors, that incidents of bullying are exceptionally rare in the school and would be dealt with if they happened.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
Staff model high expectations in a culture of trust and respect. Consequently, pupils listen attentively to their teachers and to each other. When the occasional incident of minor, off-task behaviour arises, a quick word or a glance from a teacher or teaching assistant brings pupils swiftly back on track.

These very positive attitudes to learning are reflected in pupils’ regular attendance, which is above the national average. It is notable that the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is very low and continues to reduce. Leaders are tenacious in reinforcing the paramount importance of the links between high-quality learning and pupils’ presence in school.

Inspectors observed impeccable standards of behaviour in lessons and in pupils’ conduct around the school. In supporting the lunchtime ‘family dining’ model, older pupils make it a sociable experience by ‘hosting’ younger pupils at round tables in the dining hall. Background music contributes effectively to the calm and orderly environment in which pupils display high levels of tolerance and respect for each other.

Pupils with complex needs receive high-quality care across all aspects of the school day. As a result, lessons are rarely disrupted. Collectively, pupils are mindful of individual differences and staff are skilful in deploying behaviour management techniques. Working collaboratively, they ensure that everyone has the opportunity to achieve as well as they can.

**Outcomes for pupils**

**Outstanding**

- Pupils make strong progress across all curriculum areas from their different starting points.
- By the end of key stage 1, pupils attain standards that are consistently above those of other pupils nationally in reading, writing, mathematics and science. A higher proportion of pupils than nationally achieve the greater depth standard.
- In key stage 2, pupils’ work in Years 3 and 4 shows rates of progress that are accelerating year-on-year. Leaders have identified that pupils make increasing gains in attainment the longer they have been in the school.
- The school’s own assessment information, work in books and discussions with pupils about their learning underpin the trends of improvement that inspectors noted during the inspection.
- Any relative differences between the performance of different groups are reducing. For example, previous gaps in outcomes between boys and girls are closing rapidly.
- Disadvantaged pupils attain at least as well as others nationally. Pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make very good progress over time because of well-considered support. The strong focus on speaking and listening skills, alongside carefully targeted interventions, is very effective.
- Across all year groups, the innovative curriculum combines with high-quality teaching to enable pupils to build new knowledge and skills quickly. Themed learning, incorporating literacy, numeracy and science, helps to deepen pupils’ understanding of the link between subjects and their relevance to real-life situations.
Pupils are typically confident readers who enjoy discussing and exploring books. Attainment in the phonics screening check is consistently above national expectations.

Pupils have numerous opportunities to practise and apply their reading and writing skills. Strong progress over time is clearly evidenced, in particular through the writing that is routinely displayed on classroom walls and in books.

Nevertheless, leaders are relentless in pursuing continual improvement. They know that there is still some more work to do to ensure that pupils achieve a more consistent standard of handwriting by the end of key stage 2.

**Early years provision**

- Highly effective leadership in the early years is ensuring that provision continues to improve rapidly.

- Children from a range of different nurseries settle into their Reception Year quickly. From their different starting points, they learn routines from the outset and are challenged well to flourish and thrive in a stimulating and exciting learning environment.

- While many children begin school with skills that might typically be expected for their age, they make excellent progress, in particular in their speech and language development. The range of writing opportunities and children’s progress in writing are impressive.

- The children show care and respect in a myriad of ways; in particular, they are tolerant of each other’s individual learning needs. For example, they are rarely deterred if a child with more complex needs takes a little longer to settle. Inspectors observed some occasionally challenging situations, which were managed very effectively by the teachers and teaching assistants present.

- The indoor and outdoor spaces are attractive and well resourced. Activities are designed to be fun, while capturing children’s imagination and initiating a love of learning over time. During the inspection, the week’s theme was linked to an alien-themed storybook. An alien crash-landing site had been previously set up outside and cordoned off with authentic-looking ‘crime scene investigation’ tape. Children were excited as they spoke about this with inspectors.

- In playful enquiry sessions, children were challenging themselves to learn independently, taking risks, for example, in developing their fine motor skills when sewing ‘aliens’ underpants’ and in carefully painting alien portraits using fine brush strokes. Others were writing their own alien story or role playing serving aliens in their café.

- In outside spaces, children were experimenting with a range of ingredients to determine which resulted in the best ‘alien slime’. Previous sessions helped children to learn some basic facts about the moon and the first space landing. In associated group learning they thought about what they would like to take for a picnic on the moon and practised using their phonics skills to sound out and write their shopping lists.

- Children enjoy their books and the stories that teachers read to them. They work collaboratively, demonstrating a willingness to share ideas and resources to help each
other. Phonics teaching is lively and very effective so that secure foundations are established for future learning. Children of all abilities typically become self-assured and articulate.

- Teacher-supported learning, alongside teachers’ skilful questioning to deepen understanding, is closely linked to opportunities for children to challenge themselves and to take part in playful enquiry. This is especially so in the development of children’s speech and language skills, reading and writing. Leaders know that the associated links between mathematics and other aspects of learning, while increasingly strong, are at an earlier stage of implementation.

- Staff are very well supported through high-quality professional development, research-based learning and through the work of experts from the university. Parents know that their children are happy, safe and well-cared-for. Staff are vigilant in ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are effective and compliant with statutory requirements.

- Working relationships between staff and parents are excellent. Parents are kept well informed about their children’s progress. Most are regular participants in the ‘family Friday’ sessions which allow them to join in with their children’s learning and to discuss it with school staff.
School details

Unique reference number 141500
Local authority Cambridgeshire
Inspection number 10046591

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

Type of school Primary
School category Academy free school
Age range of pupils 4 to 11
Gender of pupils Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll 300
Appropriate authority The governing body
Chair Professor Geoff Hayward
Headteacher Dr James Biddulph
Telephone number 01223 792440
Website universityprimaryschool.org.uk
Email address enquiries@universityprimaryschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2015 as a free school and designated university training school. It operates within a trust established by the University of Cambridge.
- In its first year, the school offered 30 places in each of two Reception classes and in one class in each of Years 1 and 2.
- There are currently 300 pupils on roll from Reception to Year 4.
- The school is on track to reach its full, three-form entry capacity of 630 pupils in September 2021.
- Plans are in place to provide a nursery to meet the growing needs of the local community.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
While increasing year-on-year, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below the national average. This is also the case for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and pupils with an education, health and care plan.
Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons. Some of these observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. They looked at pupils’ work in books, including their books from previous years, as well as the wide-ranging displays celebrating pupils’ progress across the school.

- They heard six pupils reading and spoke to them about the books they enjoyed. They also observed all year groups as they participated in a whole-school assembly, as they moved around the school and at break and lunchtimes.

- Meetings were held with pupils, senior leaders, nine governors, including the chair of the governing body, middle leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. They also spoke with pupils in lessons and as they played. They held discussions with individual parents at the start and end of the day.

- They also took account of the 268 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and 183 free-text responses from parents, alongside returns from 15 staff questionnaires and 185 from pupils.

- Inspectors considered the content of a wide range of school policies and documentation. This included information linked to safeguarding, child protection, pupils’ progress, the work of governors and the overall performance of the school.

Inspection team

Christine Dick, lead inspector  |  Her Majesty’s Inspector
Jo Nutbeam                  |  Ofsted Inspector
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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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