

Byron Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118559
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	358381
Inspection dates	29–30 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Peter McGregor

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	500
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ralph Gardner
Headteacher	Jim Fernie
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 22 lessons, taught by 21 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, staff and governors. No formal meeting was held with parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at school policies, assessment information, planning documentation and records of governing body meetings. In addition, 177 responses to parents' and carers' questionnaires were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is high enough.
- How well pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve.
- The extent to which resources are spent to maximise pupils' attainment, particularly in relation to staff training and facilities for information and communication technology (ICT).

Information about the school

Byron Primary is much larger than the average primary school. The number of pupils joining and leaving the school, at times other than the usual points of transition, represents a higher proportion than is normally the case. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average, as it is for those from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly mixed White and Asian, and of Indian, Pakistani, other Asian or Black African heritage. A higher than average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, predominantly moderate learning, behaviour, emotional and social, and speech, language and communication difficulties. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make up a greater than average part of the school roll, although none is at an early stage of learning English.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**2****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

Byron Primary provides a good quality of education. The headteacher, with the full support of staff and the governors, has generated an excellent environment for learning with nurturing care at its heart. Parents greatly appreciate this ethos, which results in their children achieving well socially and academically. Pupils make good progress from below age-related expectations on entry, to broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Those who are members of the school for a shorter time also progress well because of good, targeted support. The same is true of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language, whose individual needs are met through effective support. Attainment in the core areas of English and mathematics remains a focus and the school is aware that attainment is not yet high enough, particularly in Key Stage 1. Improvement in pupils' personal development and literacy is at the core of the school and achievement in these areas enables pupils to access the curriculum and succeed. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and pupils feel entirely safe.

Good teaching enables pupils to learn effectively. Staff relationships with pupils are strong. Good foundations are laid in Reception classes by giving children's social, speech and numeracy development a high priority. Setting arrangements in Years 3 to 6, which restrict the range of ability in classes in English, mathematics and ICT, are helpful and facilitate pupils' progress. Teaching is not supported effectively enough by the assessment of pupils' understanding and prior knowledge. Consequently, pupils are sometimes unsure of the next appropriate steps they need to take to make further progress. Not all lessons provide the degree of challenge needed. Extra-curricular clubs are very successful in music, sports and a range of activities. The range of subjects taught is good, although the balance of time allocated to each is not consistent across classes in year groups. Current robust systems for monitoring teaching and learning do not extend to the evaluation of timetabling. Outstanding care, guidance and support give pupils confidence and result in a very happy school. Staff quickly identify those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and cater for them exceptionally well. Safeguarding systems are detailed and effective.

The leadership team works closely together and its self-evaluation routines are good. Partnerships with parents and external groups are effective in promoting pupils' learning. A cohesive community has been established where all pupils experience personal success. Good progress has been made by leaders and managers in several key areas since the last inspection, particularly in raising pupils' attainment, their rate of progress, the quality of teaching, and of care, guidance and support. Recommendations to improve boys' writing and girls' mathematics attainment and to match work better to pupils' needs in lessons are being successfully followed through. These significant forward steps over the past three years indicate that the school has good capacity to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure consistency in teaching the curriculum across all year groups through effective monitoring of the balance of subjects.
- Raise pupils' attainment, particularly in Key Stage 1, by:
 - using assessment information more effectively to establish the next appropriate steps for pupils' learning
 - making all lessons challenging, to extend pupils' thinking and to give more opportunities for pupils to apply the knowledge they already have.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Inspectors' observations and evidence from the school's own tracking information indicate that pupils' attainment in Year 6 is broadly average and this represents good progress from their below average starting points in Year 1. The large number of pupils who join and leave the school at other than the usual time make good and sometimes better progress during their time at Byron. Nevertheless, the variations in school population do have a negative impact on attainment across a whole key stage. Building on their good achievement in personal development, numeracy and literacy skills in Reception classes, pupils experience a period of consolidation in Years 1 and 2, focusing on personal development and core skills. Attainment is below average at the end of Year 2. Progress accelerates and pupils achieve well in Years 3 to 6 because they have learnt to enjoy their education, behave well and listen. Good teaching and carefully planned intervention are key to the pupils' success. For example, in an ICT lesson where pupils were sharing ideas on writing to 'pen pals', the staff worked carefully with individuals ensuring that they enhanced their knowledge of, and skills in, word processing. Effective progress in mathematics is being achieved through initiatives such as before-school numeracy sessions for groups of pupils, where high-quality software identifies weaknesses in individuals' understanding and adjusts questions to tackle them. High expectations of pupils writing at length in a range of lessons indicates how their progress in literacy is improving across the curriculum. In these ways, the school is tackling underachievement and school tracking information shows a narrowing of the gap between boys' and girls' attainment. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those for whom English is an additional language, are making similar progress to their peers. Small-group support for these pupils is effective in improving speaking, writing and number work.

Pupils feel extremely safe in school, aware that staff provide help whenever it is needed. Infrequent bullying incidents are resolved and situations, as a Year 6 pupil said, are 'always sorted out so problems don't come back'. Movement around the school is calm and orderly. Pupils' lively, exuberant play during breaks is always within appropriate bounds because of the high-quality supervision and their own self-control. Year 6 pupils are highly effective peer mediators in the younger pupils' playground, which adds to the feeling of respect that threads through the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, seen in their positive approaches to one another of whatever background, their enthusiasm to learn, and their understanding of rights and responsibilities such as the merit system and the golden rules. Not surprisingly, pupils' behaviour is outstanding, with no exclusions or reported incidents of racist attitudes in recent years. Pupils' conduct in assemblies is exemplary. Pupils are consistently

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considerate and thoughtful in lessons and around the school. They are exceptionally happy at school as their questionnaires and those of their parents indicate. Above-average attendance reflects this. Most pupils are keen to adopt healthy lifestyles, appreciating the extra-curricular sports clubs and the good school food available. Older pupils run a healthy tuck shop. However, for those pupils who eat packed lunches, some of the varied foodstuffs included are not helpful to their development of healthy eating awareness. Pupils take pride in their involvement in the community through, for example, generating substantial sums for a local hospice, and the choir singing at several events during the year. The school council is effective and its recommendations have led to changes, such as improved facilities in the playground. As pupils develop good social awareness and more secure academic skills, they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is generally good, although the use of assessment to support learning is satisfactory. Relationships and behaviour management are often excellent, resulting in keen learners who hold their teachers in high regard. Teaching, based on good subject knowledge, provides a good balance of whole-class and individual work. Pupils in one lesson were first taught how to tell a story and then worked individually, reading stories to identify the successful structure. Teachers plan lessons well to meet the wide range of

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needs, aware of the importance of the school focus on literacy and numeracy. In a mathematics lesson on percentages, breaking down the word into 'per' and 'cent' proved very helpful to learning. Although assessment through questioning is often good, opportunities to use short breaks in activities to review understanding and to identify pupils' prior knowledge are not always used to guide the next steps in learning. When pupils are not provided with criteria they can use to judge their success, the challenge and pace fall away.

The curriculum has a number of strengths which add to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Enrichment classes in English and mathematics, in addition to good timetabled provision in both subjects, enable underachieving pupils to make effective progress. ICT has an appropriate emphasis, with timetabled sessions as well as aiding learning in a range of subjects. Strong curriculum links with local secondary schools benefit pupils, for example allowing a gifted mathematician to take GCSE modules. Very popular extra-curricular activities include the 'Boffins and Bodgers' club which successfully designs and makes go-karts in association with an engineering firm. A good balance of subjects retains pupils' interest, but inconsistencies in class timetables detract from the positive curriculum picture and result in different allocations of time for some subjects such as physical education.

Inclusive, nurturing care pervades all aspects of the school and contributes to pupils' excellent behaviour, positive attitudes and enjoyment of their education. Pastoral staff play a key role in providing this support. Pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are very well known and receive all the attention they need. Transition arrangements between the Reception and Year 1 classes and from Year 2 into Year 3 are excellent. The many pupils who join the school at other than the usual time are carefully integrated, with excellent support. Procedures to promote attendance are robust and followed rigorously. The merit award system, valued by pupils, encourages them to strive for success in all areas of their work and personal development. The great strengths in care, guidance and support can be summarised in a parent's comment, 'My son has many learning problems and the school does everything they can for him.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The vision for Byron School, promoted by the headteacher and supported by governors, is of a caring community where pupils' social development is the foundation on which to build progress in learning. This vision is being realised and the headteacher models the practice he advocates through his welcoming positive approach and a strong focus on improving pupils' attainment. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored, as are

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teachers' planning and pupils' work, although timetables are not systematically checked. Whilst support and training are proving successful in improving teaching, the consistent use of assessment to provide challenge in lessons is underdeveloped. Governors know the school well, provide direction and hold senior leaders to account for progress in the priority areas identified in the improvement plan. The school has robust procedures for safeguarding pupils. Staff receive appropriate training in child protection and safer recruitment procedures are rigorously carried out. Parents have opportunities to learn about the curriculum, entry to Reception classes and transition to secondary schools, as well as their children's progress. Workshops provided for parents in literacy, numeracy and ICT are greatly valued. Family support staff promote helpful contacts with hard to reach families and partnerships with external agencies are also good. External support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those learning English as an additional language, is used to good effect as are links with local firms and industries, such as environmental work with a power station. The school makes sure that all pupils are treated equally and that discrimination is not tolerated. A thorough understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic characteristics of the near and more distant communities enables staff to promote community cohesion effectively. Strong links established with a Ugandan school have enhanced pupils' awareness of differences and similarities between communities. The good progress of the pupils, quality of education provided and the efficient and effective use of the resources available indicate that the school provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in Reception. They join the school with starting points below those found nationally, particularly in social development, speaking and numeracy. By the end of the year their attainment is below, but near, age-related expectations. Some

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children make exceptional progress because of carefully tailored individual and group support. Teaching makes effective use of good facilities to provide a wide range of enjoyable experiences. Children have many opportunities for self-initiated imaginative play, for example when taking the roles of police. Questions, such as 'How do you know that??', and the use of pretend microphones, encourage the children to speak clearly and at length. Much that takes place in the three rooms and associated indoor and outdoor areas is planned to enhance children's independent and cooperative play, enabling them to gain confidence and learn to share. They talk enthusiastically to one another and adults about their ideas and creations when building with the many construction materials available. One-to-one teaching sessions, for example counting and adding cakes at a party, encourage the recognition of number, counting and calculating. Children appreciate the importance of following routines and taking responsibility for their actions, tidying up and washing their hands when asked. Staff model social interaction very effectively and ensure that health and safety have a high priority. Although expectations of children's development are high across the staff team, a few inconsistencies exist in practice, such as the proportions of time spent on individual, group and whole-class activity and the degree of challenge in adult-led sessions. Staff use rigorous assessment systems well to ensure that what is provided matches children's needs. Leadership is very knowledgeable and well informed about the children. Evaluation is thorough and accurate; monitoring practice and remedying inconsistencies are points for development known to the school.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are extremely happy with all aspects of the school. They identified no significant shortcomings. They are most pleased with the way the school keeps pupils safe, their children's enjoyment and general experience of school. Inspectors endorse these very positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Byron Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 177 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 500 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	100	56	73	41	3	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	116	66	61	34	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	84	47	87	49	2	1	4	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	90	51	82	46	5	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	93	53	80	45	4	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	83	47	87	49	6	3	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	76	43	97	55	3	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	78	44	85	48	7	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	73	41	93	53	5	3	4	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	65	37	100	56	9	5	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	60	34	105	59	8	5	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	89	50	82	46	3	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	104	59	69	39	5	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



31 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Byron Primary School, Gillingham ME7 5XX

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently and for taking the time to talk to us.

Byron Primary is a good school where you achieve well. Your behaviour is excellent and you make good progress as you move through the school from Reception to Year 6. You feel very safe. Although many of you know how to live healthily, your packed lunches are not all as nutritious as they could be. You are very happy with school life and attend regularly, not wanting to miss the fun and enjoyment you have. You support people who have great needs in the local area, through fundraising, and take part in musical events, as well as getting to know about pupils in far away schools, such as one in Uganda.

Your lessons are well taught and you listen well and try hard, so you do well. In some lessons we think you could be even more successful and so we are asking teachers to make certain work is sufficiently challenging for you all and that you know what to do next to improve. You are taught a wide range of subjects and have the opportunity to join a good range of clubs. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that you spend the right amount of time on each subject. The care and support staff provide for you are excellent. You appreciate what they do for you and are good at supporting one another as well.

Your headteacher, the staff and the governors consider your best interests in all that they do. They provide you with good equipment and materials that help your learning. You can help by continuing to work hard in all your lessons so that you are as successful as you can be in the future.

Thank you again for your help and our best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

Peter McGregor

Lead inspector

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