

# Byron Primary School

Bryon Road, Gillingham, ME7 5XX

## Inspection dates

9–10 January 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
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Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires special measures.

- Pupils are a long way behind other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. The levels pupils reach by the time they leave Year 6 are significantly lower than they were at the time of the previous inspection.
- Leaders have not taken effective steps to improve the standards pupils reach by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Weak teaching over time means that pupils' rates of progress are too slow and many underachieve.
- Teachers do not expect enough of pupils to get the best from them. Tasks are often too easy, particularly for the most able. It is not always clear how activities will improve pupils' skills or develop their understanding.
- When pupils are not motivated or sufficiently challenged, a minority lose concentration and stop working for short periods.
- Leaders have not acted quickly or effectively enough to reverse a significant decline in the school's effectiveness and pupils' achievement. This is partly because leaders, including the governing body, think the school is better than it is.
- The local authority has driven the recent focus on vital systems needed to secure improvements. This is too recent to have yet made enough difference to pupils' achievement.
- Leaders lack a clear and effective strategy to make the improvements in teaching that are urgently required.
- Plans for improvement do not identify clear actions that are likely to secure the improvements that are needed in key aspects of the school's work.
- The governing body has not challenged school leaders rigorously enough for the decline.

### The school has the following strengths:

- Children make better progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage than in the rest of the school.
- The school is a caring community and pupils feel safe. They are friendly and conduct themselves well around the school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 21 lessons across all classes as part of the wide range of evidence gathered about the quality of teaching and learning. Just under half of these observations were made with senior leaders from the school.
- Formal and informal discussions were held with pupils of different ages and inspectors looked at their work and heard some of them read.
- Inspectors held discussions with school staff, three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and two representatives of the local authority. They also spoke with the proposed executive headteacher of the planned federation. Inspectors took account of 57 questionnaires returned by members of staff.
- Results from 25 responses to Parent View, the online survey, were analysed alongside a recent survey conducted by the school. Inspectors spoke informally with parents and carers.
- Inspectors observed the school's work across the day and reviewed some of the school's documentation including leaders' plans for improvement, monitoring records about the quality of teaching, logs of behaviour and incidents, papers relating to the governing body, and safeguarding documentation.

## Inspection team

Clive Dunn, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christopher Christophides

Additional Inspector

Fatiha Maitland

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.*

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

## Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and children of service families) is above average.
- Approximately 70% of pupils are of White British heritage, which is below average. The remaining population is made up from a wide range of minority ethnic groups.
- Around one quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language. This is well above the national average, although few are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is well above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of pupils that join or leave the school at times other than the normal points of transition is much higher than average.
- At the time of the inspection, the school was about to enter a formal consultation to form a hard federation sharing an executive headteacher and single governing body with another local school following the forthcoming retirement of the headteacher.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good across Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
  - making better use of all available information about what pupils already know and can do to make sure that work is at the right level for them to keep them interested, particularly the most and least able
  - focusing on ensuring that tasks move pupils on in their learning, understanding or skills more rapidly and conducting lessons at a brisker pace
  - developing better questioning techniques to check pupils' understanding and extend their thinking during lessons
  - helping pupils to gain a clear understanding of the next steps they need to take to improve
  - ensuring teachers regularly use marking to help pupils improve their work and always giving them chance to respond to a teacher's comments.
- Accelerate pupils' rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics across Key Stages 1 and 2 so that they reach at least average levels by:
  - lifting teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving

- insisting on a high quality of work in response to all tasks set
- giving pupils more frequent opportunities to use and apply mathematical skills in mathematics lessons as and when they acquire them
- raising teachers' expectations of the capabilities of pupils who are lagging behind with their phonics skills to help them catch up quickly
- ensuring writing tasks motivate and stimulate both boys and girls to do their best
- developing pupils' skills in being able to work by themselves.

■ Increase the impact of leaders and managers at all levels by:

- urgently and rigorously drawing together information about the school's performance and acting swiftly using this information to identify, plan and implement precise actions to secure improvements
- setting clear, regular and measureable milestones to check whether actions are making a difference quickly enough
- focusing sharply on the learning and progress of all different groups of pupils, including the most and least able, when evaluating the quality of teaching and learning
- implementing systematic and well-planned training and professional development to improve the quality of teaching
- strengthening the role of senior leaders beyond the headteacher and middle leaders in driving improvements
- increasing the capacity of the governing body to rigorously challenge school leaders and hold them to account.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- The standards in reading, writing and mathematics reached by the end of Key Stage 2 have fallen significantly since the previous inspection. They have been much lower than the national average for the last three years.
- Standards have remained low at the end of Key Stage 1 over the last five years. Too few of the most able pupils reach the higher levels at both key stages.
- Pupils' progress is inadequate overall. Too many current pupils are making slow progress and too few make the faster progress necessary for them to catch up with where they should be. In lessons, pupils spend too much time going over previous learning.
- Different groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, those that speak English as an additional language and White British pupils, underachieve. The school is not securing equal opportunities for these pupils because it is not helping them to catch up with the expectations for their ages consistently or quickly enough.
- The numbers from particular minority ethnic groups in each cohort are often very small. Although some do better, too many pupils make less progress than their peers nationally.
- In the past, pupils that had been in school since the start of Reception often achieved better than those who joined later. For Year 6 leavers in 2013 and for many current pupils, this difference is much less marked, and too many 'home-grown' pupils also underachieve.
- Pupils targeted by pupil premium funding leaving at the end of Year 6 were behind other pupils by approximately a term in writing and six months in mathematics. They were under a term behind in reading, which was closer than the previous year. Although these gaps are smaller than those seen nationally, gaps between the achievement of these pupils and others across the school are sometimes wide and not always closing.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities in mathematics lessons to use mathematics skills routinely in real-life situations or to solve problems. The separate lessons to develop these skills are not always linked well with other mathematics work so pupils' skills do not move forward as well as they could. Pupils do too many repeated examples of the same type of calculation which does not stretch them or move them on quickly, particularly the most able.
- Pupils do not understand well enough the next steps they need to take to improve their work, particularly in writing, to ensure that all groups, including the most and least able pupils and those with special educational needs, achieve well in relation to their capabilities.
- Pupils' knowledge of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is improving, but overall they still remain behind other pupils nationally in their phonics and reading skills. Phonics teaching is now more systematic. Pupils are arranged into groups with others who are at a similar stage. However, expectations are not high enough to help those who are behind where they should be to catch up as quickly as they could.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills below the levels expected for their age. Since the arrival of the new leader of the setting in January 2013, rates of progress in the Reception Year have been accelerating and pupils are increasingly well prepared for Year 1.

### The quality of teaching

### is inadequate

- Weaknesses in the quality of teaching over time mean that pupils' progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 is inadequate.
- Teachers do not expect enough from pupils. The quality of work produced by individual pupils sometimes varies significantly between their special writing portfolio books, considered as 'best work', and daily literacy books. The most able pupils are rarely stretched. Although pupils typically know how to complete a task, it is often not clear how activities are improving their

knowledge, skills or understanding.

- Pupils of differing abilities often spend the same amount of time on very similar tasks which often slows the pace of learning, particularly for the most able pupils who are capable of more challenging work. For example, a whole class revised the same concepts in mathematics because not all pupils had a secure understanding. This is because teachers do not use information about what pupils already know and can do well enough.
- Teachers' questioning skills are undeveloped. At key learning points during a lesson, often teachers do not question well enough to check pupils' understanding thoroughly. While pupils are sometimes asked questions that require a longer answer, they are rarely challenged by follow-up questions that extend their thinking or understanding, for example, of books read.
- The quality of marking varies significantly between classes and does not show pupils how to improve their work regularly enough. In some classes, pupils are given time and are in the habit of looking back at the last piece of work, for example to do their corrections in mathematics, but pupils' books show that this practice is not typical across the school.
- Support from teaching assistants helps disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to keep up in lessons, although teachers often do not set the most appropriate tasks to move these pupils on at their own levels. Pupils can be too dependent on adult support to complete a task, sometimes with limited understanding, as seen in a literacy lesson where a pupil was unable to read back what they had written. In a number of examples where teaching assistants were most effective, they checked pupils' understanding carefully, and cleared up any misconceptions.
- Stronger teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is helping to accelerate children's progress. This is because adults ask the right questions to develop children's understanding, and model skills and how to complete tasks effectively while reinforcing key learning, such as using phonics skills to write.
- Inspectors observed a small amount of good teaching in each key stage, characterised by careful planning to meet the needs of different pupils and targeted support, but teaching is not consistently of the quality needed to lift pupils' achievement.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **require improvement**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. When pupils are not sufficiently challenged or motivated by tasks, particularly writing tasks, a minority lose concentration and stop working for short periods.
- Pupils are too reliant on adults for help and have not developed good skills in working by themselves. For example, pupils often waste time waiting for the teacher to tell them how to spell a word, rather than using a dictionary. Pupils have limited self-help strategies when stuck.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming. They conduct themselves well as they move about school, at lunchtimes and in assembly. Pupils start lessons keen to learn and respond quickly to instructions. While they may lose focus and gaze around the room or play with equipment if they become bored, they seldom disrupt learning for others. The positive views of pupils, parents and carers, staff and governors indicate that this is the typical picture.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe in this caring environment and learn how to keep themselves safe. The local authority uses the school's procedures and plans for pupils in local authority care as an exemplar for other schools.
- Pupils and parents and carers indicate that bullying is rare and dealt with effectively by the school should it occur. Pupils understand different forms that bullying can take and mix well with each other, reflective of the school's success in fostering good relationships and tackling discrimination.
- Although typically broadly average, attendance dipped last year; current figures show this is back on track.

**The leadership and management are inadequate**

- Leaders have not prevented a serious decline in the school's effectiveness and have been too slow to respond to clear indications of pupil underachievement over several years. They have not taken effective action to bring about the necessary improvements identified by the previous inspection.
- Action taken by leaders has lacked sufficient urgency because they mistakenly think the school is performing better than it is. Leaders have not effectively drawn together the information they have available, including from their own checks on the school's performance.
- Plans for improvement place too much emphasis on repeatedly monitoring the quality of what the school provides without identifying other clear actions that are likely to result in necessary improvements. The targets contained within the plans aim to bring pupils' achievement in line with national averages, but do not include shorter-term milestones towards these targets that will indicate whether improvements are being made quickly enough.
- Leaders regularly check the quality of teaching but do not focus rigorously enough on its impact on learning, for example, on more- or less-able pupils, so their evaluations and judgements are too generous. The school lacks an effective strategy for securing improvements to the quality of teaching, for example through systematically providing necessary training.
- The local authority's support for the school has intensified during the current academic year. Previous support brokered by the local authority had limited impact. This year, strong support from a local authority advisor has led to the introduction of much needed ways to increase the rigour of vital systems, for example, to check the difference made by the extra help given to individuals or small groups of pupils, including those targeted by pupil premium funding. However, these systems are not fully embedded and there is limited evidence of their impact in terms of improving pupils' achievement.
- The role of senior and middle leaders beyond the headteacher in helping to drive improvements has not been well established. While working with some of them to build their capacity, the advisor has rightly noted that they are 'champing at the bit' to take initiatives forward.
- Following discussions instigated by the local authority, the school is about to enter formal consultation to federate with a successful local school with outstanding leadership and management. The proposed executive headteacher is a Local Leader of Education with recent experience supporting schools causing concern alongside other senior leaders in the school.
- Pupils enjoy the range of subjects and opportunities provided by the school. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school with varied opportunities including in music, sport, national award-winning kit-car building and a residential visit to name but a few. In a very positive and effective assembly led by the headteacher, pupils were given an opportunity to share and reflect on their own and others' successes.
- Additional sports funding has been used to extend opportunities available for pupils including through employing a dedicated sports coach and additional training for staff. Pupils are positive and enthusiastic about their health, well-being and sport experiences but the school has yet to formally evaluate the impact of this additional funding.
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements and is a priority of the school's work, including working with other professionals and agencies to promote pupils' welfare, health and well-being.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are committed to the school but have not been rigorous enough in challenging school leaders or holding them to account for the school's weak performance. They have had training about how to interpret the school's performance data, but place too much emphasis on the school's context, such as the high pupil mobility, and do not have sufficiently high expectations of how well the school should be doing. Governors have not done enough to challenge school leaders' assertions of mostly 'good or better' teaching against the available data about pupils' slow progress, despite this discrepancy being highlighted by the local authority. Performance management procedures have not tackled underperformance rigorously enough and current pay levels significantly exceed the overall inadequate quality of teaching. The governing body is aware of how pupil premium and additional sports funding is

spent but has not yet considered the impact of this spending on improving outcomes for pupils. It is working with the local authority on plans for the future following the forthcoming retirement of the headteacher.



## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118559
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	432015

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	520
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ralph Gardner
<b>Headteacher</b>	James Fernie
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29–30 March 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 852981
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