

Benyon Primary School

Tyssen Place, South Ockendon, RM15 6PG

Inspection dates 18–19 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good		2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good		2
Quality of teaching	Good		2
Achievement of pupils	Good		2
Early years provision	Good		2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders, including governors and trustees, work effectively in partnership across the academies in the trust. As a result, teaching is good and achievement is improving.
- Governors and trustees hold leaders to account well. Together with the headteacher, they have successfully tackled weaknesses in teaching.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are rising. This is particularly the case in the early years and in Key Stage 2.
- The headteacher has built a very positive culture based on a shared vision: 'Perseverance brings success!'
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. A strong set of shared values effectively promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Children are well looked after in the early years so make a good start. A strong focus on developing their speaking and listening skills is preparing them well for Year 1.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning. Their behaviour is good because they have strong relationships with adults, who expect the highest standards of behaviour from them.
- Pupils enjoy taking on extra responsibilities around the school. This contributes significantly to an orderly and happy environment, where pupils say they feel safe.
- The vast majority of parents support the school's values, and express positive views about the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Boys make less progress in their writing than girls by the end of Year 2. The most-able pupils do not always attain the higher levels in writing by this time.
- A small number of pupils from Traveller backgrounds miss too much school and, as a result, fall behind their peers in writing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes. All but one of these observations was carried out jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Inspectors also made a number of other short visits to classrooms.
- Inspectors heard pupils read. They looked at writing and mathematics work drawn from across the school, often in the company of the headteacher or the subject leader for mathematics.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan and records on behaviour, safety and attendance. They also looked at information on individual pupils' progress, anonymised records of teachers' performance, and records of meetings held by the local governing body and the academy trustees.
- Inspectors met with pupils, interviewed a sample of staff, and spoke to parents. They also spoke to members of the local governing body, the Catalyst Academies Trust and a representative from the local authority.
- The views of parents were obtained through the school's surveys and the 85 responses to the online Parent View survey. A small number of parents provided written comments. Written comments from 28 members of staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Brian Netto, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Joanna Pedlow

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Benyon is an average-sized primary school. It became an academy in April 2013 and is part of the Catalyst Academies Trust.
- The school has been supported by a National Leader of Education who is based at Dilkes Academy. This is the sponsor academy and has National Teaching School status. The academy also supports the school through its specialist leaders programme.
- Children attend the Nursery part time and they attend full time in the Reception class.
- The large majority of pupils at Benyon are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is average. Around one in 10 pupils are from Traveller families. Few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is just above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since becoming an academy, the school appointed an assistant headteacher in January 2014 and a deputy headteacher in January 2015. There have been significant changes in staffing at Key Stage 1.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that pupils' progress in writing is accelerated at Key Stage 1, by ensuring that:
 - pupils, and particularly boys, are given opportunities to develop their skills in speaking and listening so they can improve their vocabulary
 - pupils, and especially boys, respond more regularly to teachers' marking and guidance by correcting their work
 - the most-able pupils write in greater depth in subjects like history and geography.
- Work more closely with parents to improve the attendance of the small number of pupils who miss school, including those whose families travel for part of the year, and do more to ensure that those who miss school are helped to catch up with their classmates.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Strong partnership working across the academies has enabled leaders to raise expectations so that achievement is improving rapidly, especially in the early years and in Key Stage 2. Leaders and governors have an accurate view of how well the school is doing and what still needs to be done.
- Senior leaders and staff who have additional responsibilities benefit from the support they get from the training school. This has helped to improve the accuracy of the checks on the pupils' progress. As a result, teaching is improving strongly and leaders have successfully tackled weaker teaching.
- The headteacher's determination to raise standards ensures that teachers are held to account for the progress of their pupils. Pay increases reflect good progress and improvements in teaching.
- The stimulating curriculum is built around a strong focus on communication, language and number skills. Well-designed topics engage the interests of the pupils. Pupils learn about different cultures and lifestyles, including that of the local Traveller community. There is a strong culture of care and support. Shared values help to promote tolerance and respect for differences and prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. As a result, the topics make a strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school makes effective use of additional funds. For example, the pupil premium pays for extra support in class that helps disadvantaged pupils to achieve at least as well as their peers. Funds also ensure that they can take part in all activities, including after school clubs and visits. This reflects the school's strong commitment to equality and to tackling discrimination.
- The primary sport fund is used to buy in specialist sports coaches from the training school. Pupils experience a wider range of sports, and teachers have increased confidence in teaching physical education and sports. More pupils take advantage of the opportunities now available to represent the school in competitions.
- The school has thorough and effective arrangements for safeguarding so that all statutory requirements are met.
- The local authority works in partnership with the academies to support other schools in the area.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The academy trustees and local governing body provide strong leadership in partnership with the headteacher. The school benefits from the extensive opportunities for staff to improve their skills at the local training school.
 - Trustees and governors use their wide expertise within education and elsewhere to good effect. They have a thorough appreciation of the school's strengths and main priorities for improvement. They have a good understanding of how the school performs when compared with other schools nationally. They are able to draw on the best practice from across the three academies, and this is helping to improve teaching and raise standards.
 - Governors undertake annual checks on all aspects of safeguarding. Together with regular visits and combined meetings across the three academies, they help to ensure that all statutory duties are met, including those with regard to safeguarding.
 - Governors keep a close eye on the school budget. They play their part in ensuring that pay increases reflect effective teaching and improvements in achievement. They also recognise the positive impact that funds such as the pupil premium has on improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, and the primary sport premium on promoting active and healthy lifestyles.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff promote positive relationships and pupils respond well to adult instructions. Around the school, pupils behave with respect and courtesy towards visitors and their peers.
- Pupils' attitudes towards learning are positive. They cooperate well in class. Their good attitudes are reflected in the care they take in presenting their work. They show great maturity when they correct their own work and offer ideas to their classmates on how they could improve their learning.
- Pupils are rightly proud of their school. They willingly take on additional responsibilities around the school through the 'employment' scheme. Pupils apply for jobs such as play leaders, corridor monitors or peer mediators, to help at lunchtimes. They have to pass an interview to show they have the necessary skills and commitment. Their strong contribution helps the school to run smoothly and be a happy and warm environment.
- Occasionally, pupils lose concentration in lessons, especially in Key Stage 1, when work is too easy or too hard. Their progress slows as a result.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school conducts close checks on the suitability of all staff and visitors so that pupils are kept safe. Pupils act as health and safety monitors to help the site manager with routine checks on the school. As a consequence, they say they feel safe and well looked after.
- Pupils appreciate how the school helps them to keep safe, for example through road safety talks in assembly. They understand how to keep safe when using the internet; one pupil advised others not to make friends online as, 'You don't know who they are.'
- A small number of parents voiced concerns, particularly about behaviour in the school. However, most feel that bullying is dealt with effectively and quickly. Checks on school procedures during the inspection confirm that the school takes the right course of action, involves parents and carers, and resolves matters so that all pupils are well cared for.
- Pupils have a good understanding of bullying. They recognise the emotional effect this has, so are keen not to hurt anyone's feelings. They are confident that staff will 'sort it' and some of the older pupils help to mediate minor disputes. This ensures that there is a calm and orderly atmosphere in the school.
- Although the large majority of pupils attend regularly, the school's overall attendance figures are well below the national average. This is because a number of pupils from Traveller backgrounds miss schooling when their families travel during the course of each year. The school's liaison with parents of these pupils, includes setting extra work when pupils miss school. Although attendance is improving, the school has not yet succeeded in ensuring that pupils who miss school catch up with their peers, especially in writing.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good throughout the school, with particular strengths in the early years and in Key Stage 2. Adults promote a positive climate for learning, and pupils respond eagerly to rewards for good behaviour, attendance and achievement.
- Teachers have produced their own manual of what good teaching looks like. They have had help in devising this by working alongside other teachers within the partner academies. This has ensured that teaching is now more consistent.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is improving rapidly in the early years and in

Key Stage 1. Pupils are taught to apply their phonics skills so they successfully understand new and unfamiliar words. The teaching of grammar, handwriting and spelling contributes well to a culture which encourages a love of reading.

- Writing tasks are set so pupils regularly test their skills using different styles and in different genres. For example, pupils in Year 6 showed a good appreciation of the difference between fact and opinion as they examined newspaper articles. Good subject knowledge helps pupils to improve their understanding of different texts as well their spelling, punctuation and grammar. Teachers helped pupils in Year 4 to identify different aspects of play scripts through effective questioning. Pupils were then able to apply these skills with confidence as they wrote their own plays.
- Pupils produce their best work in their 'independent writing' books. However, pupils are not required to write in depth in subjects like history and geography, especially in Key Stage 1. Their writing skills in these areas are less well developed as a result.
- Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to write at length in Key Stage 1. They do not demand enough use of speaking and listening skills, particularly among boys, to widen pupils' vocabulary so that their writing draws on a larger range of words.
- Teachers plan activities that challenge pupils to use and apply their calculation skills within investigations. This occurs weekly, and helps pupils to develop skills and fluency in understanding number and shapes. Fun activities ensure that pupils enjoy learning and are fully engaged during these lessons.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. Pupils are also given many chances to edit their own work or help their peers improve their writing. This is particularly strong in Key Stage 2, although it is too infrequent in Key Stage 1. As a result, errors are sometimes repeated, especially among boys.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Achievement is good as standards are rising across the school. It is particularly strong in the early years and in Key Stage 2. Pupils make good progress from their different starting points in all subjects.
- In 2014, pupils in Year 6 attained standards in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. For the vast majority of pupils this reflected the good progress they made from their different starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 attained standards similar to their peers in 2014 in reading, writing and mathematics. When compared with other pupils nationally, they were about two terms behind in reading, and a little over a term behind in writing and mathematics. Their progress compared well with other pupils in the school and nationally in mathematics, although fewer made more than the expected progress. They made similar progress to other pupils in the school and nationally in reading and writing. Across the school, gaps in achievement are closing because disadvantaged pupils make good progress.
- Information provided by the school shows that pupils are making accelerated progress in the early years and in Key Stage 2. Progress is good at Key Stage 1 for most groups of pupils, though in writing it has not been as strong for boys or the most-able pupils.
- In previous years, pupils' standards in the screening check on phonics (letters and their sounds) have been below the national average. Pupils are now more confident in applying their skills to recognise familiar and unfamiliar words. This helps them to read fluently and accurately.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs benefit from the effective support given to them, much of this by teaching assistants. As a result, they make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in relation to their starting points.
- In 2014 the most-able pupils' attainment in mathematics was around the average at the higher levels by

the end of Year 6. Although pupils reached around the average standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2, not enough pupils attain the higher levels, especially in writing. However, the most-able pupils now achieve well, particularly in reading and mathematics, following action by the school to bring improvements. Activities are planned so that pupils' understanding is deepened. Special activities outside the classroom make extra demands on them. As a result, their progress is accelerating.

- Boys make less progress than girls in writing, notably in Key Stage 1. This is partly due to pupils who miss school failing to catch up, in particular those from Traveller families. Other pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress. Their language develops quickly as they are given good support by teachers and teaching assistants.
- The proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year is broadly average. Children make good progress across the early years.

The early years provision is good

- Children start in the Nursery with skills typical for their age. They share the facilities with the children in Reception year so that they quickly develop skills as they learn together. The provision is rich and stimulating so children make good progress through the early years, and they are well prepared for the next stage in learning.
- Children learn well as all adults take time to talk with them and help them develop their vocabulary and understanding. This strong focus on literacy – for example, in phonics – helps them quickly to develop confidence in expressing themselves. Children engage well with a wide range of activities and excel in using their imagination in painting and other creative learning.
- The outdoor environment is used well, especially to help children develop physically and socially. During the inspection, some experimented with rolling tyres up and down hill, and skilful questioning by adults helped them to understand the difference between fast and slow. Children mix well together, take turns and show concentration in their learning.
- Every opportunity is taken to help pupils use and apply their number skills. Practical and visual materials help them with developing their awareness of number and patterns. For example, children used coins to help them buy goods from a shop during a role play. This helped them to count and make simple calculations, as well as understanding simple transactions.
- The early years is led effectively. Teachers work in partnership with other schools to check the accuracy of their assessments of the children's attainment. Parents contribute to these records so that new skills can be noted and celebrated. This enables the school to have an accurate picture of what it needs to do to improve provision.
- Children are clearly happy at school and are kept safe. Adults help to ensure that children play safely together in this warm and harmonious community.

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

Unique reference number	139382
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	449812

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Coote
Headteacher	Natalie Sansom
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
Telephone number	01708 853200
Fax number	01708 851563
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