

Bitterne CE Primary School

Brownlow Avenue, Bitterne, Southampton, SO19 7BX

Inspection dates 17–18 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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.

- This good and improving school is well led by a strong headteacher and deputy headteacher who are supported by a committed leadership team.
- The governing body is knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Members have worked very effectively with the school's leaders to ensure the success of the amalgamation between the infant and junior schools.
- Teaching is good and getting better because the school's leaders carefully monitor the quality of teaching. They then provide teachers with good training and support to ensure high standards.
- All groups of pupils make good progress. This includes disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs as well as disadvantaged pupils.
- By the time they leave the school, pupils reach standards higher than those found in most schools nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The teaching of reading is a particular strength of the school, with phonics (the sounds letters make) being exceptionally well taught. Pupils read to adults regularly, and a love of reading is seen throughout the school.
- Pupils feel safe and secure in school. The arrangements to keep them safe are good.
- Pupils told the inspectors that they enjoy coming to school, and this is reflected in the high level of attendance. They are confident that adults will look after them.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils are polite to each other and to adults. The older pupils listen carefully to each other during discussions. The younger pupils can share equipment and take turns.
- Children get off to a good start in the Reception classes. The curriculum is well planned to develop their skills and understanding through a wide range of enjoyable activities.
- Because of the high standards they achieve and their good social skills, pupils are very well prepared to move on to the secondary school.
- The school is successful at promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- The recording of work in pupils' books is not of a sufficiently high standard.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 17 lessons or parts of lessons, of which six were joint observations with a school leader. They also made short visits to classes to look at the standard of work across the school, pupils' behaviour around the school and the engagement of pupils in their work.
- Inspectors talked to pupils throughout the inspection. They also had a formal meeting to find out their views about their work, about behaviour and safety and other aspects of school life. One inspector toured the school with pupils to find out more about the breadth of their learning and the wider curriculum, including spiritual, moral, cultural and social matters.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at work in their books.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed in lessons and around the school. This included when moving between activities, when working and playing, and during assembly.
- Meetings were held with subject and other leaders, governors and parents and carers. An inspector spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a number of documents including those relating to safeguarding, policies, records relating to behaviour and attendance, minutes of meetings, letters from parents and carers, and the school's own self-evaluation.
- Inspectors took account of the 109 responses to the online questionnaire , Parent View, and had conversations with 17 parents and carers. Inspectors also took account of the 44 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Janet Maul, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Wendy Marriott	Additional Inspector
Bruce Waelend	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- In September 2014, Bitterne Church of England Junior School expanded to become a primary school by taking over the adjoining infant school, Bitterne Church of England Infant School, which had been judged to require special measures when inspected in November 2013.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and most of the teachers from the junior school remained unchanged, but only a small number of staff from the former infant school are now employed at the amalgamated school.
- The governing body is composed of governors from both the former infant and junior schools.
- Bitterne Church of England Primary school is now larger than the average primary school, having 14 classes altogether, two in each year group from Reception through to Year 6.
- Pupils are mainly taught in their 'base classes' but for some subjects, for example phonics teaching and mathematics for the older pupils, they are taught in ability groups.
- A very large majority of pupils are from a White British heritage and speak English as their first language, with a small minority coming from a variety of ethnic groups.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to that found in most schools.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding provided to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or children who are looked after by the local authority) is below average.
- Children start the early years full time in the September following their fourth birthday.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan as carefully for pupils to work by themselves as they do for direct teaching so that the work is neither too easy so that pupils are not challenged, nor so difficult that they cannot work independently
 - teachers regularly check pupils' understanding when they are working independently
 - teachers use clear 'child friendly' language in their teaching and when giving instructions
 - written guidance, for example marking and success criteria in pupils' books, is easy for pupils to understand.
- Improve the presentation of work in children's books by:
 - reviewing the school's handwriting policy
 - ensuring that handwriting is taught consistently throughout the school
 - helping pupils to set out mathematics work neatly, using a ruler to draw shapes and underlining headings.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior leadership team have got off to a very good start running the newly expanded school. In a short time, improvements can already be seen.
- Senior leaders clearly understand the strengths and areas of relative weakness throughout the school. They keep a close eye on the progress made by individuals, groups and classes of pupils so that they can quickly provide support if progress slows.
- Subject leadership is good. Leaders have a sound knowledge of the standards reached in their subjects. They understand the school's data, including the most recent evidence from termly assessments, so they know what is happening in this changing school. They undertake book scrutinies, they are involved in pupil progress meetings and they moderate pupils' work with schools in the local cluster. Subject leaders support colleagues through professional discussions, help with planning and discussing the data to improve pupils' progress.
- Good leadership in the early years ensures that children get off to a very good start. They have good links with local pre-school providers which helps with transition into school.
- Regular accurate lesson monitoring by the leadership team and a programme of coaching to improve performance are helping to improve teaching. The recent changes to the school have resulted in a staff that is open to developing its practice still further.
- Monitoring of teaching is used well to identify areas for training and development. Targets are clear and based on pupils' outcomes. Pay and performance are closely aligned.
- The curriculum is well planned and interesting. It is taught through topics which engage and motivate learners and pupils speak with interest and enthusiasm about their learning. Pupils also enjoy the wider opportunities available to them. These include residential visits and a variety of visitors who come to the school to broaden learning experiences.
- Leaders value the importance of educating the whole child and pupils learn about spiritual, moral, cultural and social matters. For example, when pupils were speaking to an inspector about trust – one of the school's Christian values – they showed a reflective attitude and care for others. Cultural understanding was seen through the school's close link to a school in Uganda. Pupils take their social responsibilities seriously. They raise money for charity and are proud to have responsible jobs to do in the school, such as being a playground buddy and older pupils partnering up with younger pupils to help them.
- British values are embedded throughout the school. Children learn about democracy when they elect the school council. Candidates have to write and deliver a speech to their peers who think carefully about who would be the best person for the job, not necessarily their best friend. They are taught to respect different faiths through their studies in religious education. They learn about their own culture by studying British history and British institutions. Approximately half the pupils in Year 6 choose to work towards a Civic Award; one aspect of this involves volunteering in the local community. Successful pupils receive their award from the mayor.
- Pupils understand that children live in a variety of family structures and they spoke compassionately about children who have difficult home lives. They gave an example of a pupil who was treated kindly by fellow pupils when he was upset by his parents' separation. An inspector saw an excellent assembly on 'difference', initially concentrating on differences in appearance and then moving on to respect for different beliefs; pupils were very thoughtful and reflective about this. The inspectors consider that the school promotes equality of opportunity, fosters good relations and tackles discrimination very well.
- The school works well with parents and carers. There was a high response to Parent View with a very large majority of parents and carers being positive about all aspects of the school. Parents and carers consider the school to be extremely approachable with the senior leadership team available in the playground at the start and end of the school day. Parents and carers are appreciative of the good arrangements in place for their children when starting school.
- The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent well. The inclusion manager monitors the support given to individual pupils carefully to ensure that these pupils are making good progress from their different starting points. Disadvantaged pupils are now making faster progress and the senior leadership team is continuing to make it a high priority within the school to maintain this.
- The inclusion manager also ensures that the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is monitored so that she can quickly make changes to the provision if progress slows.
- The local authority has given the school a high level of support, particularly in this recent period since two schools amalgamated. This has been highly effective, and the headteacher is appreciative of the help given. The expertise of the local authority was particularly helpful when recent changes were made to the

staffing and leadership of the early years.

- Leaders ensure that all staff are well trained in identifying pupils at risk of harm and that they know who to go to with concerns. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.
- The primary sports funding is used effectively to: provide training for teachers from specialist sports staff; give pupils more opportunities to take part in sporting events; provide expert coaching for pupils; and encourage pupils to take part in out-of-school sports clubs.
- The high standards that pupils reach by the time they leave the school and the good social skills they have developed mean that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- The school's leaders have ensured that attendance is good, and the pupils enjoy the awards they receive for good attendance.
- The school's website is clear and comprehensive. It includes all the statutory information required and is a helpful resource for parents and carers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and deeply committed to the school. They have a good understanding of the school's data, its strengths and weaknesses and how well it is performing compared to other schools. They chose to commission a report about the school from an external provider to help them validate their judgements. Governors know what the quality of teaching is like as they receive regular reports from the headteacher. They took the opportunity offered by the amalgamation of the two schools to reform the staffing structure and there is now a close link between pay and performance. Governors offer the headteacher both challenge and support. The school's finances are well managed and money is spent appropriately. All governors attend training regularly. Governors understand the need to promote equality of opportunity. One way they do this is to ensure that the recruitment process for all jobs is fair and transparent. They work hard to foster good relations within the community by being a visible presence in and around the school and responding quickly to concerns.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils say they behave well and this view is supported by a very large majority of staff and parents and carers. Pupils are polite and well mannered to each other and to adults.
- Inspectors saw pupils nearly always 'on task' in lessons. Pupils move around the school safely and sensibly and quickly transfer between activities.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning because teachers plan interesting lessons and activities. They understand that good behaviour helps them to learn.
- Pupils play well together at playtimes and lunchtimes. The inspector saw pupils excitedly chatting while waiting their turn at skipping with the big rope. Despite their excitement they were queuing sensibly. Even the youngest children are skilled at taking turns and sharing toys. In a writing lesson the inspector saw them helping each other with their phonics work.
- Pupils are given clear guidance on behaviour and understand the school's reward systems and also the consequences of unacceptable behaviour.
- Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy telling visitors about it. They are good at 'tidying up' but this neatness does not always extend to work in books which is sometimes scruffy and does not always reflect the pupils' good understanding.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school.
- Pupils told the inspector that racist or bullying behaviour 'almost never happens' but if it does it is dealt with well. Actions include contacting the pupils' parents and carers and reinforcing anti-bullying and anti-racism in lessons and assemblies.
- Record keeping for safeguarding pupils is of a high standard and concerns are always followed up.
- The school also has effective systems for recording and dealing with behavioural, racist or bullying incidents. All are reported to the governing body.
- Attendance is better than the national average and there have been no exclusions for several years. Unexplained absences are carefully followed up.
- There are effective systems in place to check that people who work with pupils are suitable to do so. All staff and most governors are trained in safeguarding children. The headteacher and deputy headteacher

have had specialist training.

- The site is safe and well maintained.
- A large number of staff are trained in first aid.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They know about the different types of bullying including cyber bullying. They know what to do to keep themselves safe on the roads and understand about 'stranger danger'. They also have a good understanding of e-safety and how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. A theatre company came into school to teach pupils about e-safety and this had made a big impact on the pupils.
- Pupils are confident about approaching an adult if they are worried about anything.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good or better, with reading, writing and mathematics all being taught effectively. As a result, all groups of pupils make good progress. Pupils' progress is monitored closely and teachers ensure that any pupil who requires additional help is given it.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and expect them to listen carefully and do their best. As a result, pupils have good attitudes to learning which helps them to acquire skills and knowledge.
- Teachers regularly assess pupils' progress and use the information gained to plan for pupils' next steps in learning. However teachers do not always check pupils' understanding when they are working independently; rather they rely on pupils alerting them if they do not understand a concept or if they are stuck. This means that teachers do not always realise if the work is too easy or too difficult and can result in pupils wasting learning time.
- Marking is a strength of the school. Pupils understand the marking scheme and eagerly look in their books for their teacher's comments. Pupils are given regular opportunities to respond to the marking in order to make their work better. Pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work further.
- Pupils produce a good quantity of work and the content is usually of a high standard, but this is not always seen in the presentation in books which often does not reflect the quality of the learning.
- Teachers are diligent about setting their pupils targets, and most pupils know what they need to do to further improve their work. When pupils reach one of their targets they are quickly set another, which enables them to improve their work.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and keen to impart their knowledge but this can sometimes result in them giving overlong explanations or instructions that are too complicated.
- Phonics is well taught. Although phonics teaching is mainly centred in the lower school, teachers ensure that pupils continue to have these strategies taught or reinforced until they have mastered these important skills, no matter what year group they are in. This good start is built upon with teachers fostering a love of reading and literature. One of the school's displays that the pupils proudly showed an inspector consisted of photographs of children reading in unusual places. This showed pupils' ingenuity as well as love of literature!

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Progress across different year groups and key stages is currently strong in reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence from the school's assessment records and the work seen in pupils' books support this view.
- Good teaching is helping pupils who had not made enough progress before they joined the school to catch up and they are making accelerated progress. Current Year 2 pupils are now on course to reach similar levels to other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children join Reception with skills and knowledge at levels slightly lower than those typical for their age, particularly in speaking and managing their feelings. Due to the good teaching they receive, they quickly catch up and now a large majority of the children are working at a level typical for their age in all of the areas of learning. In 2014, a similar proportion of children achieved a good level of development, as is found in most schools. This year, a greater proportion of children are on track to achieve a good level of development.
- Last year, the proportion of pupils in the school who reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 was lower than the national average. This year, a very high proportion are already working very close to the expected standard. The inspection team saw phonics being taught very well and pupils exhibiting a high level of phonics skills, supporting the school's view.

- Pupils make very good progress in reading due to well-planned teaching of reading throughout the school. Pupils read widely and often both in school and at home.
- Pupils make good progress across Key Stage 2. This was clearly seen in the national assessments where pupils achieved higher scores in reading and writing compared to other schools nationally, and much higher scores in mathematics. The school's performance in the national assessment has improved year-on-year for the last four years.
- In 2014, a greater proportion of the most able pupils achieved the highest levels in the tests for reading, writing and mathematics than found nationally. The work in the books of the most able pupils in the current Year 6 is of an extremely high standard.
- Last year, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs made the same amount of progress as similar pupils nationally. The school's progress records show that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs currently in school are making good progress from their different starting points.
- At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 were approximately four terms behind their classmates in reading and writing and three terms behind in mathematics. When compared to other pupils nationally, they were four terms behind in reading, three terms behind in writing and two terms behind in mathematics. This gap in attainment is steadily closing. The gap within school is not closing as quickly, as the performance of the other pupils has improved year-on-year. Analysis of the progress of the current Year 6 disadvantaged pupils shows that due to the good support they receive, they are making faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics than the other children in the year group.

The early years provision

is good

- Parents and carers of children in the Reception classes think that the arrangements for their children to start school are very good. There are many opportunities for parents and carers and children to visit, so by the time they start school the school staff know all the children by name.
- Children join the early years with skills and knowledge that are on average slightly lower than those typical in most schools, particularly in speaking and managing their feelings. Good teaching enables them to catch up quickly and children are making good progress from their different starting points.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs or who are disadvantaged quickly have their needs identified and they are given extra help.
- Children learn well in the early years because of the good teaching they receive in all the seven areas of learning. Teachers create exciting ways to learn both inside and in the well-laid-out outside area. While all children are learning well, some of the lower-ability children would benefit from more guidance and support in choosing their independent learning activities.
- Phonics is taught very well in Reception, as are other early reading skills. For example, an inspector saw children fully engaged in a 'treasure hunt' for key words which showed that they could read this basic vocabulary.
- Adults engage children in conversations that encourage them to think and respond with full answers. The adults value what children have to say and this makes children keen to contribute.
- Behaviour is good in the Reception classes and children learn and play harmoniously. The inspector saw them helping each other to spell and count. One boy was concentrating very hard using his fingers to add up. When he found that he needed more than 10 fingers he borrowed a friend's hand and the mathematics lesson continued very happily!
- Teachers in the Reception class accurately assess the children's learning and track their progress carefully. As a result, they know what each child needs to learn next and incorporate this into their planning.
- Leadership in the early years is good and is focused on raising attainment for all children in all aspects of the curriculum. Teachers and teaching assistants make a strong team and the leader makes sure that the whole team has opportunities for training and development.
- Provision and teaching in the early years have improved this year. The leader has an accurate picture of the strengths of the early years and what needs to be done to make them better still.
- Children are well prepared to move on to Year 1.

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	116339
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	453506

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	414
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cheryl Hubbard
Headteacher	Andrew Peterson
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 February 2013
Telephone number	02380 499494
Fax number	02380 499495
Email address	info@bitterneceprimary.net

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