

Bligh Infant School

Bligh Way, Strood, Rochester, Kent, ME2 2XJ

Inspection dates 1–2 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The determined vision of the executive headteacher, in partnership with the head of school, inspires excellence for all. As a result, the whole school community thrives.
- All leaders make a positive difference to pupils' achievement and personal development. All areas of the curriculum are continually developed and improved.
- Leaders ensure any gaps in attainment between groups of pupils close quickly. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics is consistently above national averages at all levels, and continues to rise.
- Governors are ambitious for all pupils and the community the school serves. They are insightful about what needs to happen and hold leaders robustly to account for the difference their actions make.
- Pupils are friendly and behave exceptionally well around the school. High levels of consideration, support and tolerance towards others are expected. Shared values weave strongly through the curriculum.
- Teaching across the school is outstanding. Consequently pupils' achieve exceptionally. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and plan activities which precisely meet pupils' needs. Occasionally, in science, pupils are not fully extended in the same way that they are in English and mathematics.
- Additional support, from skilled teaching assistants, leads to pupils making substantial gains in their learning.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) is excellent. Consequently, almost all pupils secure the expected standard at the end of Year 1.
- Pupils with complex medical needs receive exceptional support because leaders and staff have high levels of skill and knowledge.
- Provision in the early years is outstanding. Challenging activities in all areas of learning extend children's thinking regularly. Children make rapid progress and leave well prepared for Year 1.
- The school's proactive work to keep children safe from harm is extremely secure. Partnerships with a wide range of external partners are strong and effective.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons, including two jointly with the head of school and two jointly with the assistant headteacher. Short visits were made to four small group sessions.
- Inspectors held meetings with the head of school, senior and middle leaders and a group of three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors also met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views through talking to pupils around the school, in lessons and by meeting with a group of pupils. Pupils' behaviour was observed around the school at break and lunchtimes.
- Pupils' work across all areas of the curriculum was analysed to look closely at their achievement and the quality of teachers' marking. Inspectors heard some pupils read.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's checks on its own effectiveness, information about current pupils' achievement and attendance, behaviour logs, minutes of governing body meetings and the school development plan. Inspectors checked the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe, including the checks made on staff.
- Inspectors looked at 23 responses to Ofsted's online survey (Parent View) and other correspondence from parents during the inspection. In addition, inspectors considered 32 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Abigail Wilkinson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Teresa Davies

Additional Inspector

Peter Lacey-Hastings

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bligh Infant School is an average-sized infant school.
- The school is part of the Bligh Federation which encompasses Bligh Junior School, Bligh Sure Start and Bligh Children’s Centre. The executive headteacher and a single governing body lead these provisions.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority) is broadly average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average, including those pupils with statements of special educational needs.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are below the national average.
- Children in the Reception class attend full time.
- The executive headteacher is an accredited Local Leader of Education (LLE).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve achievement by routinely extending the level of challenge in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The executive headteacher sets extremely high standards of performance for the school community. Her determined, visionary leadership has ensured that the school is a hub of excellence where all pupils thrive and succeed. She has empowered the senior team, exceptionally led by the head of school, to deliver outstanding performance. Together, they make sure pupils' futures are not left to chance.
- Senior leaders are outstanding teachers who model high levels of professional behaviour. They demonstrate a nuanced response to any areas of weakness. No stone is left unturned. Every action they take makes a significant difference to pupils' achievement and personal development. They are highly successful and are now, rightly, supporting practice more widely in other schools.
- Middle leaders thrive on the professional learning they receive to develop their leadership skills. In turn, the bespoke training and coaching they deliver to staff secure outstanding teaching for the subjects they lead. They know their subjects exceptionally well and make precise, timely checks on teachers' work. Their actions lead to pupils making substantial gains in their learning.
- The special educational needs coordinator does excellent work. Her leadership of staff training ensures all pupils, including those with complex medical needs, receive quality therapy and support. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well because staff have the right skills to help them succeed. All senior leaders hold the national qualification for this area of the school's work.
- The curriculum typifies the care leaders take to continually promote and develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Themes skilfully weave together aspects of learning across a number of subjects. Work on light, for example, encompasses work in science, art and religious education. Appreciation of other faiths and cultures threads seamlessly through all topics, tackling discrimination effectively and building tolerance and respect for pupils from a range of backgrounds. As a result, pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders use the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils exceptionally well to close gaps in attainment and achievement. Their attention to detail, ensuring every additional programme is tailor made to individuals, guarantees pupils of all backgrounds achieve equally well.
- Sport funding has enriched the programme of sporting opportunities for all pupils. Parents who spoke to inspectors were delighted with the increased range of clubs and opportunities for competitive sport on offer to their children. Participation rates are ever increasing, and some clubs have waiting lists.
- Parents are united in their support and appreciation of the school's work. They say that the school is at the heart of their community and meets their children's needs exceptionally well. Parents greatly appreciate the Bligh Federation's seamless support from birth to 11 and welcome the access to health care, including an onsite midwife and speech therapist. They value the advice and guidance of the wide range of professionals that leaders commission to work in the school.
- Staff are highly vigilant in their work to safeguard pupils. They record any concerns meticulously and quickly consult external agencies where appropriate. Regular training ensures the school is fully compliant with all recent legislation, including keeping pupils safe from extremism.
- The local authority rightly judges this school to need light touch support. External validation for aspects of the school's work, such as the school's self-evaluation, is helpful. The local authority appropriately commissions the school to lead on phonics and the use of the pupil premium funding across the local consortia of schools. It has successfully deployed the executive headteacher as a Local Leader of Education.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is ambitious for pupils. Expectations of staff are high and the performance targets they are set are challenging. Only exceptional staff performance is rewarded. Governors drive improvements successfully because they forensically check information about pupils' achievement. Consequently, they are insightful about what needs to happen and maintain an accurate view of the school's performance, including the quality of teaching.
 - Governors bring professional expertise to many aspects of the school's work. They take their responsibilities seriously, particularly with regards to safeguarding, and routinely check all policies and procedures are robust. They recognise and welcome their wider community responsibilities and forge strong, successful links with parents.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Overwhelmingly, parents agree. This is a thriving, happy school community where core values permeate every aspect of pupils' work and play.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and are determined because adults believe in them. Consequently, their enjoyment and success across the curriculum are high. Pupils recognise the impact their behaviour has on others and share a sense of responsibility for making the school a happy place.
- Pupils show high levels of consideration and tolerance towards others of every background, because adults in the school model this consistently. Name calling and unkind behaviour are extremely rare. Pupils know this behaviour is not acceptable and play their part to ensure the community includes everybody.
- Pupils' behaviour is calm and purposeful, but busy. There is a buzz of excitement during lessons. Pupils enjoy being challenged.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well at all times, including times when they are not in lessons, because they value the rewards on offer. They are extremely proud when they secure a place at the 'fine dining' table, or collect value tokens for their team.
- All pupils develop skills such as cooperation, listening and perseverance, because of skilful teaching through groups such as the Buddy Club. Pupils regulate their own behaviour well as a result and independently remind each other to be 'good listeners' and 'good thinkers'.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. All parents who contributed their views agree.
- Pupils say they feel safe and trust adults to help them if they need them to. Relationships between staff and pupils centre strongly on making good choices and this ensures pupils manage risk extremely well.
- Pupils talk knowledgeably about how to keep safe when using computers and crossing the road. Even the very youngest pupils know which climbing and balancing activities are safe for them to try on the 'trim trail', and all pupils use large play equipment with care and consideration of others.
- Pupils' attendance is above average because pupils want to be in school. Leaders robustly challenge the persistent absence of a small minority of pupils and offer appropriately sensitive support to families of pupils with complex medical conditions. There are no exclusions.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding. Pupils make rapid and sustained progress, both in the early years and across Key Stage 1.
- All teaching enables pupils to reach their potential. High levels of challenge characterise lessons, which fully stretches pupils. This, alongside highly effective support from other adults, ensures pupils of all abilities succeed.
- Learning is at the centre of all activity. Teachers are highly skilled and use their extensive subject knowledge to precisely shape their responses to pupils in lessons. Sequences of lessons build quickly on what pupils know and can do, engaging and motivating all learners.
- In mathematics, pupils recall number facts quickly and count flexibly to help them solve calculations. They investigate a wide range of problems to develop their reasoning. In Year 2, for example, pupils learned to work logically to find all of the ways to sequence different coloured counters. They were encouraged to look for patterns in their answers so that they could accurately predict what would happen if they added extra counters.
- Pupils read well because there is a wide range of opportunities to strengthen their reading within the curriculum. All pupils read regularly with adults and other pupils. The libraries are welcoming and well resourced and, consequently, pupils independently choose to use them. Additionally, pupils access a mobile library that regularly visits the school. Many parents that spoke to inspectors talked about the rapid progress their children had made in reading since they started the school.
- Writing across a range of subjects is imaginative and technically accurate. Teaching focuses carefully on handwriting and how sentences are constructed and sequenced. Pupils write engagingly about topics such as 'seasides', comparing what they are like now with how they were in the past. They use technical language carefully to evaluate the work of artists such as Jackson Pollock. Pupils are pleased with their success in writing and take pride in their work as a result.
- Phonics teaching is exceptional in this school. Almost all pupils secure the expected standard in phonics at

the end of Year 1. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, use high quality, purposeful resources and ensure pupils move rapidly through sounds at every stage. Pupils immediately apply their knowledge to reading and writing, with high levels of success.

- Pupils receive immediate feedback in lessons about their learning. Teachers use strong questioning to check understanding and have high expectations of pupils' responses. Pupils are clear about what they have done well and look forward to their teachers setting them challenges or next steps. In science, however, pupils are occasionally not fully extended in the same way that they are in English and mathematics.
- Additional adults enable pupils to make rapid progress because they focus on pupils' learning and personal development in all of their work. They successfully offer support, but also equip pupils with the skills to learn for themselves.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils reach overall standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are significantly above the national average. This has been the case for the last four years and standards are set to rise even further this year.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' work in these subjects shows rapid growth and development because teaching focuses on the right things to move pupils learning on quickly. Additional support effectively closes gaps because it caters precisely for the needs of each individual pupil.
- Almost every Year 1 pupil secures the expected standard in the phonic screening check. Achievement is in the top 5% of schools nationally for this area of their work.
- Pupils achieve well in all curriculum subjects. An increasing proportion of pupils is working above expectations for their age in science, history and geography, for example. Although these proportions are not yet as high as those in English and mathematics.
- Pupils make rapid progress across all years. There are no exceptions. Teachers' strong subject knowledge and excellent assessment practices ensure that this is the case.
- The most able pupils make outstanding progress. The proportion of pupils securing higher National Curriculum levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is consistently above the national average. This is set to rise this year because leaders ensured additional challenge in lessons for a small proportion of boys and disadvantaged pupils.
- A significant focus on boys' achievement this year has delivered impressive results. In reading and writing, the proportion of more able boys securing the highest National Curriculum level of attainment has more than doubled from their starting points at the end of the early years.
- Adults have high expectations of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Consequently, they make excellent progress in all subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils make exceptional progress. Over the last three years, gaps in attainment between these pupils and other pupils nationally have closed rapidly. This year, gaps in school have closed completely because leaders have taken highly effective steps to ensure this is the case.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Children make rapid progress in the early years because of effective leadership, outstanding teaching and excellent provision across all areas of learning.
- From starting points below those typical for their age, especially in language and communication, children make substantial gains and typically reach or exceed a good level of development. They are very well prepared for Year 1.
- Stimulating indoor and outdoor environments foster children's curiosity and independence. Resources engage and support successful learning. Teachers challenge children to be thinkers and problem solvers. In one session, children who received a 'challenge bag' worked together to find doubles with numbers greater than five. They correctly doubled eight by independently using a number square from the available resources.
- All staff use skilful questions to check understanding and extend children's thinking further. Teachers prompted children to consider why spiders live in webs, for example, when they were reading a book about insects. All children's needs are met because teachers use their regular, accurate observations to

shape subsequent activities.

- Children’s behaviour at work and play is excellent. Staff ensure that children are kept safe and secure at all times. Children approach all activities enthusiastically and show positive attitudes to learning across the curriculum. At playtime they manage risk well, using the ‘trim trail’ safely and reminding other children to wear their sun hats and sunscreen.
- There are strong effective partnerships with the children’s centre and nursery. Adults work together to provide a seamless transition between the settings.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors are extremely happy with the quality of provision their young children receive and are delighted with the excellent progress they make. They welcome the frequent opportunities they are given to share their children’s success.

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	118500
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	448165

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	266
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Broom
Headteacher	Tina Gobell (Executive headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 February 2010
Telephone number	01634 3362200
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