

Birchington Church of England Primary School

Park Lane, Birchington, Kent CT7 0AS

Inspection dates	13–14 January 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Birchington’s friendly and inclusive atmosphere ensures that pupils feel extremely safe and valued.
- Pupils’ highly positive attitudes to learning mean they make the most of school life. They are extremely well mannered and polite, and behave exceptionally well.
- The headteacher’s highly effective leadership has been central to the school’s improvement.
- Leaders’ and governors’ success is reflected in pupils’ rising achievement since the previous inspection. Achievement has quickly lifted and is now securely good.
- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils make rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics because teaching is consistently effective.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in writing. Attainment in writing at the end of Year 6 has been much higher than the national average for the past two years.
- Teachers and leaders pay close attention to pupils’ learning needs and to their personal well-being. They have consistently high expectations of all pupils.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils are confident learners and well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Good-quality teaching in early years ensures that children learn well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The teaching of science is not as well developed as other subjects.
- Some of the activities in the early years outdoor areas do not deepen and extend children’s understanding as well as those in the classrooms.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the teaching of science by ensuring that pupils have sufficient opportunities to practise and develop scientific investigation skills.
- Make sure that activities in the early years outdoor areas are of the same good quality as those in the classrooms.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders and staff are committed to ensuring that all pupils achieve their full potential, paying close attention to each pupil's individual characteristics and needs. They successfully teach pupils that they can make a difference in their own learning by doing their best, working hard and getting on well with their friends.
- The headteacher has the highest expectations of herself, as well as her staff and pupils. Her thorough, sensible and determined approach to the school's development has ensured that improvements in pupils' achievement are secure and sustainable.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher work extremely well together. They lead by example, providing a strong steer for their staff. Staff, governors and pupils are fiercely proud of their school, and rightly so. Staff morale is high.
- Leaders, governors and staff have worked very well together to develop a thorough, clear and accessible procedure for assessing pupils' learning. The deputy headteacher has been integral to the system's success, working supportively with teachers and leaders to ensure that all feel confident in its use.
- Leaders and governors work closely with teachers to check pupils' learning systematically. They are quick to spot any pupils who are making slower progress or are at risk of falling behind.
- The introduction of curriculum hubs (staff teams working on particular subjects) means that more teachers have the opportunity to play a part in developing the way subjects are taught. The teams include teachers from different year groups, ensuring that the needs of pupils of all ages and stages are considered in curriculum development.
- The school's well-planned curriculum ensures that pupils are capable, confident learners by the end of Year 6. Pupils learn a wide range of subjects so that their learning is broad and balanced. However, the school's understandable focus on English and mathematics since the previous inspection means that the teaching of science is not as well developed as other subjects. For example, while the teaching of science gives pupils opportunities to learn about scientific knowledge, there are fewer opportunities for them to practise and develop scientific investigation skills. The science leader is very capable and knowledgeable about her subject and has already identified this for the next stage in improving the teaching of science.
- Leaders use the primary physical education and sports premium well to develop pupils' health and well-being, focusing on improvements which they will be able to sustain in the long term. For example, pupils shadow the sports coaches when they are teaching games, learning how to teach these to other pupils. A wider range of sports clubs means there is something to suit most pupils' interests, so they are popular and well attended. The number of pupils participating in clubs doubled in the past year.
- Staff at all levels provide strong role models for pupils and work together positively and professionally. Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain. They are keen learners and achieve well.
- British values and the school's religious values, such as forgiveness, fairness and respect, are threaded throughout school life, underpinning its work. Pupils' understanding of social, moral, spiritual and cultural issues is developed well through the broad and interesting curriculum. Staff and pupils feel confident and respected, with one pupil commenting: 'I love this school because everyone is treated the same.'
- Leaders have developed good links with parents. For example, they recently worked with parents to arrange the most convenient times for workshops, such as the recent meeting about assessment procedures, so that more are able to attend.
- The school's recently updated website provides a comprehensive and easily accessible range of current information for parents and visitors. For example, parents can access very clear guidance about the school's work, such as the way teachers assess pupils' learning, as well as presentations and workshops to help them to support their children at home. Most parents who completed the online questionnaire feel the school is well led and managed; they say they would recommend it to others.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding flexibly and effectively to support disadvantaged pupils' changing needs as they move through the year groups. Records provide some striking examples of rapid progress made by some pupils who have additional needs.
- Clear and regular procedures for managing staff performance help to sustain the momentum of improving teaching. Teachers regularly reflect on their own practice, discussing and agreeing the next steps in their training and career development with senior leaders. High-quality coaching for staff has had a significant effect on teachers' practice, securing rapid improvements in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- A knowledgeable and skilful team of governors provides effective support and challenge for school leaders. All governors participate in activities in school which help them to keep up to date with the school's work. For example, they see how well pupils are behaving and learning during visits to classrooms, and gauge pupil and staff views during discussions and through surveys.
- Governors meet regularly with the curriculum hub committees to discuss the school's work, with a consistent focus on how well actions are making a difference to pupils' achievement. They do not shy away from asking challenging questions of school leaders to probe the school's reports and analyses and so effectively hold leaders to account. Their work is enhanced by the open, professional relationship they have with staff and other school leaders, and by making sure they are accessible and approachable to parents.
- Governors are well qualified in safeguarding issues, regularly attending training with the school staff.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective, with leaders affording these an extremely high priority. They make sure that recruitment checks are thorough and complete, with rigorous systems in place to ensure that nobody is missed. Leaders and managers manage and maintain records exceptionally well, so that pupils are safe. Staff and governors complete a comprehensive range of training. Well-established procedures ensure that staff new to the school have essential safeguarding and child protection information at an early stage.
- Staff consistently apply safeguarding policies across the school and share responsibility for pupils' well-being. Leaders go the extra mile to ensure that the needs of potentially vulnerable pupils joining the school are given the attention and support needed to help them to settle, so that these pupils thrive. Leaders involve pupils of all ages in discussions about safety and behaviour rules; as a result, they understand why these are important and how they can contribute to ensuring that the school is a safe place to learn and play.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers are keen to develop their practice, quickly putting ideas and advice into practice. As a result, teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is consistently effective across the school.
- Teachers have high expectations of all pupils, regardless of ability or background. They expect everyone to behave well and to work hard. They set challenging tasks which require careful thought. This ensures that pupils' learning is checked and extended.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning effectively during lessons to check pupils' understanding. They listen carefully to pupils' responses, looking out for misconceptions and sorting out any confusion.
- Teachers make sure pupils learn basic number facts securely, so that they can use them quickly to solve mathematical problems. They teach pupils to choose and use a wide range of resources to help them, such as number lines and tables squares, so that pupils tackle calculations with increasing confidence.
- Reading is taught well so that pupils enjoy books and learn how to read confidently. Effective phonics teaching (letters and the sounds that they make) ensures that they secure the key skills they need to read and write successfully from an early age. Teachers incorporate good-quality books into everyday classroom life, frequently reading from a wide range of genres, so that pupils are immersed in a reading culture and are keen to read.
- Teaching assistants are clear about their roles during lessons and support pupils of differing abilities very well. They share teachers' high expectations of all pupils, gently drawing them back into learning if any show signs of losing concentration.
- The teaching of science is less well developed than other subject areas. While teachers give pupils opportunities to research and gather scientific information, they give them fewer activities which develop science investigation and experimental skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils hold their school in high esteem. They value their education and respect adults, recognising that their teachers want

them to do their best. They talk enthusiastically about learning and demonstrate exemplary attitudes to learning.

- Parents appreciate the steps the school takes to develop pupils' personal skills, as well as their academic learning. For example, one said: 'My son has learnt how to be responsible for his own actions and to be mindful of the needs of others.'
- The older pupils take their responsibilities very seriously and feel that teachers appreciate their hard work. For example, the Tidy Team help to keep the playgrounds free of litter during lunchtimes, gently reminding other pupils about looking after their school.
- Pupils know what to do if something troubles them when using the internet. They are confident about speaking to their teachers and know where to find helpful links, such as ChildLine and the National Crime Agency (formerly the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre). Pupils know why it is unsafe to give personal information online.
- Pupils have a mature view about how to keep healthy and active. For example, they understand why nuts and sweets are not permitted in school. Many pupils are involved in one of the school sports clubs and so regularly exercise.
- Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is in line with national averages. Leaders work very well with parents and agencies to support those who attend less well, leading to rapid improvements in individual pupils' attendance. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has decreased since the previous inspection to below average levels.
- Pupils enjoy going to the school's breakfast club because it gives them an opportunity to catch up with friends in different classes and year groups in a relaxed, comfortable setting. Breakfast club provides a good start to the school day for those who attend.
- Most parents who completed the online questionnaire consider pupils to be safe and happy in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils live up to their teachers' high expectations by behaving extremely well in lessons, during playtimes and when moving between lessons. Parents recognise the school's success in developing pupils' personal responsibility. One commented: 'My child has not only developed academically, but also as a person who is responsible for his actions and mindful of others'.
- Pupils in all year groups take learning very seriously, settling to work quickly during lessons and making sure they do not distract their classmates. They listen carefully to their teachers and respond quickly to instructions. School records and leaders' observations of learning confirm pupils' consistently excellent attitudes to learning over time.
- Pupils provide very good role models for each other. For example, Year 6 pupils do a commendable job of demonstrating how to behave in the lunch hall and by helping the younger pupils with their games during playtimes.
- Pupils behave calmly and extremely sensibly during breaktimes and when moving around the school. Pupils get on very well with each other and with staff. They say that everyone is treated fairly and like the fact that teachers happily apologise if they make a mistake.
- Pupils are very clear about the rules in the playground and around the school. They know what to do if they are worried about anything and feel very safe. One said: 'There is always someone to give you time out and to listen to you.' Leaders deal with the rare incidents of bullying promptly and appropriately.
- Leaders work very closely with parents and agencies to support pupils who need extra help, leading to rapid and sustained improvements in some individual pupils' behaviour and well-being. They keep detailed records and are quick to seek specialist advice if they have a concern.
- Most parents who completed the online questionnaire feel pupils are well behaved.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Improvements in teaching have quickened pupils' progress since the previous inspection. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2014, pupils' attainment rose substantially at the end of both key stages to levels above the national average. Attainment was particularly high at the end of Key Stage 1. Increased standards were sustained in 2015, reflecting the consistently good quality of teaching across the school.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in writing. Pupils make increasingly rapid progress as they move up through the year groups. In 2015, pupils' attainment in writing was in line with the national average at

the end of Key Stage 1 and much higher at the end of Key Stage 2. By the end of Year 6, pupils write confidently and competently.

- Pupils achieve well in mathematics. They regularly practise number calculations, which gives them a very secure framework of knowledge and skills. In 2015, attainment was in line with national averages at the end of both key stages.
- Pupils progress well in reading. Pupils talk about books with huge enjoyment and have a strong sense of their own progress. For example, during the inspection a number remarked on the way teachers and parents have helped them to become successful readers by making sure they read regularly in school and at home. In 2015, attainment in reading was in line with the national average at the end of both key stages.
- Sound phonics skills ensure that pupils have reliable tools to help them to read successfully. Improvements in the Year 1 phonics check results in 2014 to levels higher than the national average were sustained in 2015. Information about pupils' learning and their current reading and writing skills indicate that the school is on track to sustain this positive track record in the future.
- The proportions of disadvantaged pupils achieving the expected levels in the Year 1 phonics check have increased rapidly since the previous inspection. In 2015, all disadvantaged pupils achieved the expected level in the Year 1 phonics check, putting them in a very secure position for future gains in reading and writing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress, both academically and personally. By the end of Year 6 they have the confidence and skills to work without adult help with increasing confidence, and so are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress and some make strong progress. Some have a number of additional needs which mean they find learning more difficult. This leads to some fluctuations in this group's attainment each year at the end of Year 6. In 2015, the gap in attainment between this group and other pupils nationally was smaller than at the time of the previous inspection at the end of both key stages and closed completely in writing at the end of Year 6.
- The most-able pupils benefit from teachers' high expectations and from activities which test and extend their understanding. They make good progress in their learning. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels at the end of each key stage varies a little each year according to pupils' starting points. However, attainment is rising as pupils move up through the year groups. At the end of Year 6, the proportions attaining Level 5 were above average in writing.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years areas are characterised by busy children, happily playing and learning together. Children feel safe and valued, confidently talking to adults and classmates about their learning.
- All groups of children make good progress from their different starting points because teaching is effective. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has increased since the previous inspection and was in line with the national average in 2015. This ensures that children are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Good use of pupil premium funding ensures that disadvantaged children make the same rapid progress as their classmates. Adults understand their needs and make sure they develop the key skills they need to learn successfully.
- Leaders give the development of children's language skills an appropriately strong focus, with well-planned activities strengthening and extending their use of vocabulary in their speaking and writing. All children rapidly grow in self-esteem, developing some of the key social and language skills they need to learn well.
- Some children have specific speech and language difficulties when they join Reception. Leaders make sure these children receive the extra help they need to make good progress, including specialist speech and language support where appropriate.
- Children are polite and extremely well behaved. Attractive classrooms and well-established routines ensure that children feel comfortable. Children follow the classroom rules very seriously and know how these help them to keep safe. For example, they understand that they must only go into the outdoor area when an adult is present to ensure their safety. Relationships are strong so that children feel safe and respected.

- The highly experienced early years leader provides effective leadership for her team. She works closely with other leaders, governors and early years staff to ensure that children are safe and secure. She has a clear view about the next steps the school needs to take to improve learning even further, including improvements in the outdoor areas.
- Good-quality and inviting activities mean that children are keen to get started at the start of each session. Adults successfully encourage children to try a wide range of activities, so that they learn well in all aspects of the early years curriculum.
- The outdoor area is spacious, secure and well supervised. However, while children clearly enjoy using the resources in this area, some activities are not of the same good quality as those in the classrooms, with fewer opportunities for children to deepen and extend their understanding. Leaders have identified the outdoor area as a key focus for development, with carefully considered plans already prepared.

School details

Unique reference number	118693
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10002356

This inspection 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	416
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lorraine Bant
Headteacher	Kath Barham
Telephone number	01843 841046
Website	www.birchington-primary.com
Email address	headteacher@birchington.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 September 2013

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above that found in most schools. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and looked-after children.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school provides a breakfast club, which was included in this inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed learning in 18 lessons or part lessons, including three completed with senior leaders.
- The inspection team held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers, members of staff, a local authority representative, parents and pupils. They also met with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors.
- The inspection team took account of 37 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as a recent school survey. In addition, they considered the views expressed by parents who spoke with them informally at the start of the school day.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and considered a range of documents, including the school's improvement plan, information about pupils' progress, attendance records and safeguarding policies.
- The inspection team looked at a sample of pupils' work provided by the school, as well as looking at pupils' work in lessons. They also listened to pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 reading.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Joyce Lydford	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Lakey	Ofsted Inspector

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