

# St Mildred's Primary Infant School

St Mildred's Avenue, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 2BX

**Inspection dates** 27–28 January 2016

**Overall effectiveness** **Outstanding**

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | Outstanding |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Outstanding |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | Outstanding |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | Outstanding |
| Early years provision                        | Outstanding |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- This is a vibrant school where children flourish. There has been significant improvement since the previous inspection so that now it is providing an outstanding education.
- Consistently high-quality teaching across the school means that pupils make excellent progress and their reading, writing and mathematics skills are well above average. This has been the case for several years and standards continue to rise.
- Teachers have an excellent understanding of what the pupils know already and what they need to do next so that learning moves on at a rapid pace. They involve the pupils in planning the learning and build on their interests. They provide a rich blend of experiences so that the pupils enjoy and achieve well in all areas of learning.
- Vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs, disabilities and medical conditions are exceptionally well provided for. Carefully thought out, sensitive support enables them to benefit from the broad and rich curriculum and make excellent progress.
- The youngest children thrive as a result of outstanding early years provision. They benefit from well-planned, exciting learning experiences, high-quality care and highly effective individual attention.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and well-being are outstanding because of exceptionally high levels of care and an explicit focus on developing core values such as honesty, teamwork and enjoyment. Pupils behave well, enjoy each other's company, are highly confident learners and keen to do their very best.
- Senior leaders and governors provide exceptional clarity of purpose and direction. They are totally committed to continuous improvement for the school as a whole and for each individual pupil and member of staff. Leaders know the strengths of the school and those few aspects, such as cultural development and scientific writing, which could improve still further.

## **Full report**

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

- Provide pupils with more opportunities to explain scientific ideas in writing.
- Enable pupils to develop a greater understanding of different cultures.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**is outstanding**

- The partnership with Bromstone School has brought about a number of important improvements. As the executive headteacher is now providing overarching leadership of both schools, senior leaders have had to take on a greater level of responsibility. They have done so admirably so that senior leadership is exceptionally strong. They mentor, encourage, challenge and motivate staff and pupils alike. Staff responses to the Ofsted survey show that they are proud to be part of the school, enjoy working here and rate the quality of leadership and management very highly indeed.
- School leaders and staff work with other schools in the Great Expectations Learning Alliance to share their good practice and learn from others. Leaders and staff are always on the lookout to identify and build on the skills of all staff. As a result staff, including teaching assistants, are highly trained and enthusiastic to enhance their expertise even further. The partnership with Bromstone has enabled the two schools to share provision such as a speech and language therapist and Reading Recovery teacher. These specialists, in turn, are training school staff to carry out interventions and support work more effectively.
- The school's positive culture is underpinned by the school's core values which were discussed and agreed by staff, governors and pupils. These are referred to constantly by pupils and staff and underpin the day-to-day life of the school. For example, the sense of enjoyment around the school is palpable. Leaders have ensured that pupils have opportunities to think about and understand values such as tolerance through the very evident inclusion and respect shown to all pupils regardless of gender, cultural background or special needs.
- The leadership of special educational needs is impressive. Each member of the special needs team knows each child and their precise needs exceptionally well. They have an excellent knowledge of the specialised expertise and support that is available outside the school and work very well in partnership with these external agencies. They ensure that each child is fully included in all aspects of school life and has equal opportunities to enjoy learning in the broadest sense.
- Subject leadership is organised in teams which means that responsibilities are shared and that less experienced leaders develop their skills quickly. These leaders champion their subjects and have influenced their colleagues so that improvements are very evident in the quality of teaching and learning across different subjects.
- Monitoring is rigorous and supportive. This helps staff to know what they do well and how to improve further. Leaders have high expectations of themselves, the staff and pupils. Self-evaluation is detailed and improvement planning practical and effective. The current focus on writing is proving to be very effective and the quality of pupils' writing is improving rapidly.
- Leaders have made sure that all staff have a very good understanding of the demands of the new National Curriculum. There is very careful planning to make sure that all subjects are covered in depth and that the curriculum is brought to life by building on the interests and enthusiasm of the pupils. Spiritual, moral and social development are exceptionally well developed because of the wealth of exciting, thought-provoking activities. The curriculum is relatively weak on helping pupils to learn about and understand different cultures, and this is rightly a current priority for improvement. Values are woven through different subjects and also emphasised in specific personal development activities.
- Additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils is exceptionally well planned and the impact carefully evaluated so that these pupils make rapid progress. Leaders check regularly to make sure that all pupils, particularly vulnerable groups and individuals, are making rapid progress. They evaluate the effectiveness of additional support and are constantly seeking even better ways to speed up the progress of this group and provide them with enriching experiences in school.
- The additional primary sports funding has also been very effectively used so that staff have been well trained and pupils experience high-quality physical education and participate in a wide range of exciting physical education activities.
- Parents who responded to the online survey are overwhelmingly positive about the school in general and about the high quality of leadership and management. Many wrote additional comments commending the quality of education and the care their children receive. A tiny minority feel that the leaders could do more to let them know how well their children are doing and provide more opportunities to see at first hand what life is like in the classroom.
- The local authority is confident that the school is providing an excellent education. There is very little direct support but the school invites advisers and consultants to work alongside staff to develop skills such as in subject leadership and to check on the accuracy of leaders' judgements about the quality of provision. Improvement advisers promote the school-to-school support and check on the impact of this work.

## ■ The governance of the school

- Governors are keenly involved in school life. They have changed the way they work over the past two years to make governance more efficient and effective. New governors have joined the school and the school benefits from their varied and valuable skills and experiences.
  - Governors are sharply focused on the achievements and well-being of pupils and staff. They visit the school regularly, check health and safety and safeguarding systems are secure and also check that the school improvement plan is being carried out and that it is leading to the required improvements. They are quick to challenge if something is not improving as quickly as it should.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The safeguarding policy has been recently updated in line with the most recent legislation and guidance. Staff undergo regular training and four senior staff are now trained in depth as safeguarding leaders. Checks are rigorously carried out before anyone is able to work in the school. New staff receive an individual session to make sure they fully understand the procedures and their responsibilities. Governors keep a close eye on safeguarding arrangements to make sure the school is doing all it can to ensure pupils' safety.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

is outstanding

- All of the adults in the classrooms are highly trained and exceptionally effective. Classrooms are well organised, activities are well planned and interesting and promote a real thirst for learning. Displays celebrate and support learning. The walls are rich with appropriate vocabulary for the current topics that are being explored. The pupils are encouraged to, and do, use the displays to support their learning. Adults have very high expectations about behaviour and this, along with clear routines, helps to ensure that pupils feel secure and behave well.
- Teachers listen to and build on pupils' interests. For example, the current museum topic in Year 2 varies from class to class as a result of listening to the pupils and using their ideas. Learning is planned to develop strong learning habits and to promote enjoyment and independence. Teachers plan activities so that pupils select from a range of challenges. This gives the pupils a say over their learning and promotes 'have a go' attitudes. The pace of learning is brisk so that pupils make rapid progress in most lessons.
- The school has 'adopted' a set of cartoon characters such as 'have a go Harold hedgehog' and 'don't give up Donald Duck' to help pupils recognise different features of learning, and the pupils are able to explain what type of learning they need to use for different activities.
- Teachers show an excellent understanding of what the pupils already know and the next steps to extend their learning. Adults are alert during lessons to provide support when necessary and also to move the pupils on quickly if they opt for a task that is too easy for them. They also provide useful guidance in the pupils' books and pupils check this carefully and respond to any requests, for example to think of a better word for a sentence or to complete an extra challenge in mathematics. Just occasionally, the pitch is not quite right and the work is a little easy for the most-able pupils. This is something teachers are very aware of and are working on to improve.
- Staff take responsibility for the progress pupils make and track their reading, writing and mathematics skills intensively. Year group teams along with senior leaders discuss these achievements, including pupils' well-being, in great depth at six-weekly meetings. Action is taken immediately if any pupils are not making enough progress.
- The support for pupils with additional needs including special educational needs or disabilities is excellent. Sensitive, subtle support is provided in all classes to ensure that these pupils receive expert provision to meet their needs. There is a strong emphasis on making sure that these pupils are able to enjoy a wide and interesting curriculum just like all the other pupils.
- The teaching of early reading is excellent and a much greater than average proportion of pupils achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Teachers capitalise on that solid foundation by making good use of high-quality children's books to stimulate an enjoyment of reading and writing. This enjoyment was evident during the inspection as one class cheered when they heard it was time for reading. The school has prioritised the teaching of writing as an aspect they want to improve. Teachers across the school are using a range of techniques which are proving effective. For example, they make very good use of drama so that the pupils retell stories. This supports the acquisition of a wide range of interesting vocabulary which the pupils use in their own writing. For example, Year 1 pupils used words such as 'tinkering' and 'fiddling' in their writing. This approach is also helping them to use punctuation correctly.

- Mathematics is also taught exceptionally well. Teachers model effective strategies to solve problems. Activities are well planned to provide different levels of challenge and, in the main, the pupils choose the right level where they have to push themselves just a little bit. The pupils are confident in using a good range of practical resources to help their thinking and develop their understanding.
- The teachers make the learning interesting and relevant by building links across different subjects. For example, Year 1 pupils made waterproof shelters using art straws and appropriate materials. As well as promoting their design, technology and science understanding, the activity engendered a lot of cooperation and purposeful discussion and was linked to a story they were enjoying. Reading, writing, speaking and listening are golden threads woven through all activities. There is a strong emphasis on finding things out and asking questions and this promotes the pupils' interest and enthusiasm. However, in science teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to write about their findings or ideas.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**is outstanding**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. This aspect is given an exceptionally high priority. Pupils' well-being is assessed and discussed regularly. Highly trained staff are able to provide both daily support and also specific support, such as play therapy, when needed. The improvements in well-being are evidence that this approach is effective. Several parents who sent in written comments mentioned particularly this aspect of the school's work, saying that their children had grown in confidence and enjoyed school as a result of the exceptional support they had received.
- The vast majority of staff and parents say school is safe and the children are happy and well cared for. Pupils are confident and get on very well together inside and outside the classroom. They are quick to celebrate the achievements of other pupils and they understand that different people have different needs and may require more support or encouragement to try hard and do well. The support for vulnerable pupils is excellent and enables them to play a full part in school life.
- Celebration assemblies are a lovely recognition of the school's values. Nominated pupils from each class who have demonstrated the school's values become Jedi knights for the week. They are very proud of their cloaks and hold their light-sabres high with obvious pride. The pupils also enthusiastically celebrate achievements from outside school such as swimming and horse-riding awards.
- Pupils are eager to talk about their contribution to the school, particularly through demonstrating the values which they played a full part in agreeing. They understand values such as tolerance and democracy through assembly themes and also through opportunities for pupils to elect representatives and team captains. They are confident that they make a difference and that the school is a better place because of their actions. They also contribute to the wider world; for example, the school raised the most money of all Kent schools for the Porchlight homeless charity.
- The school manages transitions into the school, between classes and onwards to junior school very well indeed so that children of all ages are exceptionally well equipped to take the next steps in education with confidence.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Almost all parents and staff say that pupils' behaviour is good and managed well. Pupils collaborate, cooperate and show high levels of persistence and concentration. They are keen to get on, settle quickly and set about activities with gusto.
- Relationships are warm and very positive. This starts at breakfast club which is a calm, gentle start to the day and continues in lesson, playtimes and lunchtimes.
- The well-organised routines help pupils to behave safely in school, as do the corridor monitors who remind other children, and adults, about behaving safely.
- Pupils say there is very little, if any, bullying. There are occasional disagreements which the adults sort out very quickly. They know what to do to stay safe including how to use technology safely.
- The attendance figures are affected by absences of some pupils because of medical needs, hospital appointments and visits. Nonetheless attendance is improving and is currently running at well above the national average.

## Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Pupils make exceptional progress and by the time they move on to junior school their reading, writing and mathematics skills are significantly above the national averages. Year 1 pupils achieve well above the national average in their early reading skills and this underpins their excellent achievement in reading and writing in Year 2.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very strong. They stay focused on their learning and show high levels of enjoyment, concentration and perseverance. They readily talk about what they are learning. They know what they need to do to achieve well. They enjoy the opportunities to select the level of challenge and usually opt for something to make them try hard.
- Overall, disadvantaged pupils make rapid progress during their time in the school. By the end of Year 2, their achievement is at least as high as the average for all pupils nationally and just a little lower than their classmates.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve exceptionally well because of the individual care and attention given and because they have full access to the broad and rich curriculum. They make exceptionally rapid progress because of the precise, high-quality support they receive. Examples seen during the inspection included pupils who only a few weeks ago were writing individual words and practising writing individual letters, and are now writing extended sentences.
- The work in their books is consistently high quality and shows that they are making rapid progress. Pupils enjoy talking about their writing and they make good use of the vocabulary support on walls and tables to make their writing interesting. They are skilful and enthusiastic readers.
- Pupils achieve very well across different subjects as well as in English and mathematics. There are high-quality examples of work in history, geography, art, design technology and physical education. There is evidence of interesting learning in science but the pupils' books show that opportunities to write and explain scientific ideas are a little thin.

## Early years provision

is outstanding

- The early years staff work very effectively as a well-oiled team. They are passionate about ensuring that each child gets the very best possible start to their educational life. They are ably led by an assistant head who uses her deep knowledge and understanding of early years to excellent effect. The leader and staff show drive and enthusiasm to continue to improve outcomes for all children.
- The children arrive with skills and abilities which are broadly in line with the expectations for children of the same age elsewhere. They do very well indeed, including the higher than average proportion of children who have education, health and care plans and the rising number who are at the early stages of learning English. By the time they move into Year 1 about three quarters of children achieve a good level of development which is the expected level for their age. They achieve very well across all areas of learning. The quality of provision has improved rapidly so that the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development rose significantly last year and is already on track to be much higher this year.
- The early years leader has established very effective systems, which are used consistently across the Reception classes, for checking on progress and to identify any gaps in learning. The team check carefully to make sure that all areas of learning are covered and that all of the children are making rapid progress. They identify any gaps in either areas of learning or with individual children and are quick to adapt activities or individual support to address the gaps. As a result, most children who start with knowledge and skills below those typical for their age are sensitively supported so that they catch up.
- Staff continually promote independence and self-confidence and there is an exceptionally strong emphasis on developing children's emotional well-being. As a result, the children are very settled and thoroughly enjoy each other's company and their learning. Children cooperate and show consideration towards each other. They are keen to do well and show high levels of enthusiasm and concentration.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the early years is of consistently high quality. Teachers build on the children's interests and provide an excellent variety of intriguing activities to fascinate the children in their learning. Activities to promote reasoning, creativity and problem solving are carefully planned. For example, children were engrossed in using directional language and counting steps to move programmable toys through a maze of wooden blocks.
- The organisation of learning means that, at times, children move freely between the three classrooms and the outside areas. This widens the range of their learning experiences and promotes their relationships with a broader group of adults and children. Adults manage this exceptionally well, making

sure that systems and organisation are consistent and of equally high quality throughout. The adults use excellent questioning and observation to check on how well the children are achieving and to move the learning on.

- The teaching of early reading and writing skills is very well planned so that children begin to enjoy and develop good literacy skills at an early stage. There are dedicated sessions to develop their knowledge of letters and sounds. Children are supported to act out and retell stories in the role play areas and adults work with small groups guiding and modelling writing so that more-able children can write properly punctuated sentences.
- The adults model good learning behaviours and they have very high expectations regarding learning and behaviour. The children respond very well. They know how to be a good learner, to make friends and how to be a good friend. They are very well cared for and know how to stay safe. The environment is safe as well as stimulating and safeguarding is effective.
- Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress and about how learning is organised in the early years.



## School details

|                                |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 118405   |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Kent     |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 10003463 |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Infant   |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Maintained   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 4–7  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 270  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | David Lawson   |
| <b>Executive headteacher</b>               | Susan Collins  |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01843 862035   |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.st-mildreds.kent.sch.uk">www.st-mildreds.kent.sch.uk</a>                 |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | <a href="mailto:Headteacher@st-mildreds.kent.sch.uk">Headteacher@st-mildreds.kent.sch.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 10–11 March 2011   |

## Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher became the executive headteacher of St Mildred's and Bromstone Primary School. At that time Bromstone was judged to require improvement. It was inspected in March 2015 and was judged to be a good school. The executive headteacher has overarching responsibility for both schools and each is led and managed by a head of school.
- St Mildred's is a slightly larger than average infant school and is situated in Broadstairs on the Kent coast.
- There are three classes in each year group from Reception to Year 2 and most pupils remain in this school for the whole of their infant school life.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average.
- The great majority of pupils are White British with English as their home language.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for special educational needs is well below average. However the proportion with an education, health and care plan is above average. Some of this latter group have complex medical needs.
- The school collaborates, shares and develops expertise with a group of other local schools which form the Great Expectations Learning Alliance, as well as with the partner school.



## Information about this inspection

- This inspection started as an inspection of a good school under section 8 of the Education Act, 2005. On day 1, the lead inspector converted the inspection into a full into a section 5 inspection in order to gather sufficient evidence to establish whether the school was now outstanding. Three Ofsted Inspectors joined the lead inspector on the second day.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes and looked at the work in the pupils' books. On day 1, the lead inspector and senior leaders jointly observed learning throughout on two lengthy tours of the school. On day 2 further observations were carried out in all classes. Most of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. During these observations, inspectors looked at pupils' books. They also carried out a further scrutiny of samples of science, writing, topic and mathematics books from Years 1 and 2 and learning journals from Reception.
- The lead inspector had lunch with pupils on day 1 and another inspector did the same on day 2. Inspectors met with two groups of pupils on day 2. Inspectors spent time outside at playtime and visited a whole-school assembly and breakfast club.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of information provided by the school including assessment information, curriculum plans, monitoring records, self-evaluation and improvement planning documents and records of governors' activities.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, four governors, subject leaders and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector also met with a teacher who is relatively new to the school and her mentor.
- Inspectors took account of 11 responses to its online staff survey, 78 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online parent survey) and 31 written comments posted by parents on the Parent View site.

## Inspection team

|                                  |                         |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Sheena MacDonald, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Helen Baxter                     | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Rosemary Beattie                 | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Martin Garratt                   | Ofsted Inspector        |

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