

Brunswick House Primary School

Leafy Lane, Maidstone, Kent ME16 0QQ

Inspection dates

2–3 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not adequately maintained some of the systems that enable the school to run effectively. For instance, there is no planning for how the funding for disadvantaged pupils is to be spent. Also, staff have not been kept up to date with guidance about safeguarding.
- Procedures for recording information about safeguarding are erratic.
- The school's self-evaluation of its work is over-generous because issues are analysed too superficially. As a result, the identification of priorities for further development lacks precision.
- Plans for improvement do not have sharp success criteria against which leaders can evaluate the impact of actions taken.
- Some teaching does not challenge the most-able pupils enough or provide activities to deepen further their understanding.

The school has the following strengths

- Governance has recently been strengthened and governors are beginning to hold leaders to account more effectively.
- The effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment in the school is typically good, resulting in pupils making good progress overall, particularly in Key Stage 2 and the early years.
- Pupils feel safe and enjoy the wide range of interesting activities planned for them, including a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- The curriculum is well designed. The school makes particularly good use of outdoor learning experiences.
- Good leadership of teaching in the early years results in children achieving well. They experience a broad range of activities to encourage their enjoyment of learning.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. Pupils are polite, friendly and respectful to each other and adults. Their positive attitudes support the good progress they make with their learning.
- The school's work in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is highly effective. This helps pupils to value diversity and respect the faiths and beliefs of other people.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all arrangements for safeguarding meet the requirements set by the government, by:
 - ensuring that staff are kept up to date with guidance on keeping children safe in education
 - systematically recording all relevant information about pupils and cataloguing work with external agencies.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that leaders robustly and accurately evaluate their work, taking into account the progress of all groups of pupils
 - make stronger links between self-evaluation and improvement planning in order to have greater impact on outcomes for pupils
 - setting out, in action plans, clear targets and descriptions of what will be achieved at key points in the year to enable senior leaders and governors to monitor the impact of actions throughout the year.

- Improve teaching to ensure that all pupils, including the most able, make good progress from their different starting points by ensuring that teaching:
 - provides consistent and high levels of challenge, appropriate to pupils' needs and abilities
 - provides clear guidance on how to improve, through feedback to pupils about their work.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Recent changes to the leadership of the school have resulted in some areas of the school's work not receiving adequate attention. This has resulted in a failure to keep staff informed of current guidance from the government on safeguarding pupils. Staff are committed to the good care of all pupils but they have not had sufficient training to ensure they are fully effective in caring for any of those who are potentially vulnerable.
- The headteacher and school leaders are passionate about the school and proud of improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2. However, a lack of careful analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the school has led to leaders being slow to address areas for further improvement.
- Due to insufficient rigour, the schools' evaluation of its own performance is too high. The school's development plan is general and does not have sharply focused priorities or success criteria matched closely to pupils' needs. Plans for improvement lack precision about groups of pupils where improvement is required. Furthermore, there are no clear milestones against which leaders and governors regularly check the impact of actions taken. Leaders following action plans introduce a range of initiatives and monitor their implementation, but they do not evaluate how effective their actions have been.
- The deputy headteacher has been absent since September 2015 and this limits the capacity of the leadership to drive further improvement. Steps have now been taken to address this.
- Middle leaders show enthusiasm, energy and insight. Some subject leaders are new to their roles and have accurately identified areas for improvement. The strong specialist knowledge of middle leaders, coupled with their commitment to lead change, indicates high potential for further improvement.
- Leaders check pupils' progress through the school regularly. They identify individuals who are falling behind and take steps to help them catch up. A range of interventions and additional support are in place, but the impact of the support is not always measured. Leaders have not analysed the below-average attendance of disadvantaged pupils or put in place effective actions to address this.
- Additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils was used effectively last year to help close the gap by the end of Key Stage 2. However, plans are not in place to spend this year's funding on targeted need or to track its impact.
- Staff are positive about working at the school and feel well supported. There is a comprehensive training programme and all staff are involved in working parties, focusing on different aspects of the curriculum.
- Pupils experience a rich and varied curriculum. School leaders use outdoor learning spaces well. The outdoor classroom, allotments and the pond motivate pupils and help them learn about the world. Creativity is encouraged and the school has gained recognition for the promotion of arts and care for the environment. The curriculum is further enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which are well attended by pupils.
- Promotion of healthy eating is well planned and pupils show good awareness of what constitutes healthy lifestyles.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well, preparing them securely for life in modern Britain. Displays around the school are well designed to demonstrate how all the talents shown by pupils are valued. The multicultural nature of the school and diversity are celebrated. Pupils are developing understanding of democracy by voting members onto the school council. There are a wide range of leadership opportunities for pupils, including providing friendship and support for other pupils.
- The school uses the additional sports funding to provide a good range of sporting activities during and after school. Qualified sports coaches are helping teachers develop their skills to further improve the teaching of physical education. Strong leadership by the physical education subject leader has led to sport being an integral part of school life.
- Most parents who contributed to the online Parent View questionnaire or who contacted inspectors were positive about the school, but a small minority do not feel that the school is well led and managed.
- The local authority carried out a review of leadership and governance at the end of the autumn term. This identified a number of concerns and a national leader of education has been allocated to the school to support the necessary improvements to leadership.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors accepted all recommendations of the local authority review and actions have already been taken to strengthen governance. The new Chair of the Governing Body, appointed in December, is astute and determined to improve systems in the school, including performance management. A national leader of governance has been allocated to support the chair develop his practice.
- New appointments to the governing body have broadened the range of expertise and experience. Governors are closely monitoring school activities and are developing a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Governors are now offering more robust challenge to school leaders.
- Some aspects of the arrangements for safeguarding are effective but there are areas in need of improvement. Leaders and governors have not ensured that staff are fully up to date with information about keeping children safe. The child protection policy has recently been updated to conform to statutory guidance and plans are in place for further training. Staff, who know children well, are quick to report any concerns they have about children in the school. These concerns are acted on in a timely way and appropriate referrals are made to other agencies. However, notes of actions taken and next steps required are not recorded in a systematic way.
- The large majority of parents feel that their children are safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers, including in the early years, provide tasks that interest pupils and encourage them to do their best. They model the values of respect and tolerance and expect pupils to cooperate, for example by talking in pairs about their work. They praise pupils' efforts and help them to be proud of their work.
- Teachers plan a series of lessons which generally build well on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Often, a range of tasks is offered to pupils, who usually select one which will stretch them and extend their understanding. Questioning techniques by both teachers and teaching assistants skilfully support and challenge pupils' thinking and learning. Teachers often link learning to real life to promote pupils' understanding. Occasionally, the most-able pupils could be further stretched.
- Feedback by teachers in books is regular and follows the school's policy, but it is not always effective in guiding pupils about how to improve their work. As a result, pupils do not always know what they need to do to progress well towards meeting their targets.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Teachers work closely with their teaching assistants, who know the pupils well. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the care and development of pupils who have special educational needs. As a result, these pupils are closing the gap with other pupils.
- The use of a consistently applied reading strategy leads to good progress in reading across the school. Teachers and teaching assistants routinely listen to pupils read and promote their thinking skills to improve their reading. The teaching of phonics is effective and pupils are able to use their phonics skills to read difficult or unfamiliar words. This contributes positively to pupils' enjoyment of reading.
- Pupils' writing is a strength of the school. Teachers use excellent examples of pupils' writing to model for others how to improve. In a Year 6 lesson, the most-able pupils used technical language to explain how they have developed their writing and enriched their vocabulary through reading. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to write at length and redraft their work. As a result, pupils make good progress with their writing.
- The teaching of mathematics is less consistent. There is an emphasis on helping pupils develop number and calculation skills, and some problem solving is evident, but very little reasoning. This has been a requirement of the National Curriculum since September 2014 and the school has been slow to introduce this.
- Teaching in science is focused mainly on outdoor learning and learning through natural experiences, including the development of the school's pond which helps pupils learn about different habitats. Curriculum coverage is enhanced by science focus weeks. However, planning is focused on topics and does not promote the development of scientific skills well. Pupils do not routinely explain scientific ideas in writing.
- Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the use of homework to extend their learning. They described how they read regularly at home and particularly enjoy the 'mathletics' challenges. Displays of homework around the school reinforce its importance.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school is a happy place. The great majority of pupils enjoy learning and show pride in their school.
- Pupils take on responsibilities enthusiastically and enjoy contributing to school life. Peer mediators work well to support pupils who have worries or lack confidence.
- A very large majority of parents agree that their children enjoy school and feel safe.
- Pupils told inspectors they feel safe in school and know who to turn to if they have a concern. They are very clear about how to avoid danger when using the internet. There are no problems with racism and derogatory language is rarely used. If bullying does occur, it is always dealt with promptly by staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors.
- Pupils take pride in their work, their appearance and the school in general. They conduct themselves well around the school. The inspectors saw no low-level disruption during lessons. However, pupils report that in some classes, they are distracted by pupils who do not always behave well.
- Occasionally, when teaching lacks challenge, some pupils' attention wanes and they lose concentration.
- Overall attendance is higher than national levels but the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is too low.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2015 was above the national average in reading and writing. It was in line with the national average in mathematics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Progress in writing improved and exceeded national levels. Progress in reading and mathematics is in line with national levels. Attainment at the higher levels was above average in writing and in line with the national average in reading and mathematics.
- At the end-of-Year-2 tests in Key Stage 1 in 2014 and 2015, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly average at both threshold and higher levels. Performance at the highest levels in both key stages is not strong, except for writing at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in the Year 1 phonics check has improved significantly during the last two years and in 2015 was above the national average.
- Pupils' knowledge and skills in phonics are helping them to improve and enjoy their reading.
- Evidence gathered during the inspection, including lesson observations, work in pupils' books, school assessment information and talking to pupils, indicates that current pupils in all classes across Key Stages 1 and 2 are making at least expected progress, with many making good progress in reading and writing. However, the most-able pupils are not always given sufficiently challenging work in lessons to help them achieve the highest standards.
- In mathematics, pupils generally make good progress, developing fluency in number and acquiring new skills and methods appropriately. However, pupils are not routinely showing development of reasoning in mathematics and this limits attainment at the highest levels.
- In the early years, the proportion of children that achieved a good level of development in 2015 was well above the national average. The school's performance information indicates that children are on course to exceed national levels again this year.
- Disadvantaged pupils make progress in line with their peers by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, although fewer meet the expected standard in phonics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make progress in line with that of other pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. This is due to well-targeted deployment of adults to provide effective support, teaching that is suited to their needs and the good oversight of provision by the special educational needs coordinator.

Early years provision

is good

- Children start in the Reception class with skills that are broadly typical for their age.
- As a result of good teaching and high-quality support, most children make good progress with their learning by the time they leave Reception. Children are well prepared for their move to Year 1.
- Disadvantaged children and those who have special educational needs or disability do not progress as well as their classmates. This has been identified by the early years leader and plans are in place to address this. Children who speak English as an additional language make good progress with their learning.
- The learning environment is well resourced, highly stimulating and supports a good range of play and learning activities. The outside area is particularly rich. Children enjoy choosing activities and are engaged, motivated to learn and curious. A lack of direction by staff means that sometimes children opt for activities which do not always develop their learning needs.
- The information that is gathered through assessment is detailed, and children's learning journals capture what children are able to do. However, it is not always clear how this information is used to plan for the next steps in children's learning. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to challenge the most-able children to extend their learning.
- During a visit to the outdoor classroom on the school site, children were developing confidence and knowledge about the world. Effective questioning by teachers and teaching assistants reinforced vocabulary and understanding about size comparisons. Children showed sustained concentration as they used tools to peel carrots and make mud sculptures. They were intrigued by the challenge of making a bridge that did not wobble, and showed consideration for others to take turns and share ideas.
- Children's health and safety is promoted well. Good levels of adult supervision and support keeps children safe. Healthy eating is actively encouraged.
- Children's behaviour in the early years is good. They feel safe and are prepared to play and learn with a spirit of adventure as they develop their social and physical skills.
- The provision is well led and managed. Staff work together well as a cohesive team. There are strong links with parents to ensure that children settle into routines as quickly and smoothly as possible. Parents are very positive about the early years and the care and support their children receive.

School details

Unique reference number	118297
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10001371

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	420
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Golding
Headteacher	Wendy Skinner
Telephone number	01622 752102
Website	www.brunswick-house.kent.sch.uk
Email address	office@brunswick-house.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 October 2010

Information about this school

- Brunswick House is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding) is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average and a small proportion speak English as an additional language.
- Children in the school's Reception classes attend full time.
- A national leader of education and a national leader of governance have recently been allocated to support the school.
- The deputy headteacher has been absent since September 2015 and an interim deputy headteacher is due to join the school by the end of February 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons, across all year groups, seven jointly with school leaders. The lead inspector also visited most classes with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, four governors including the Chair of the Governing Body and three representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work, heard pupils read, observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school and at breaktimes and talked informally with pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account the 69 responses on the online parent questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also considered the 63 freetext question responses submitted by parents. Responses to the 33 online questionnaires completed by staff and 72 by pupils were also taken into account.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including those to do with safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of visits by the local authority, information about pupils' outcomes supplied by the school, the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school's improvement plans.

Inspection team

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Ann McCarthy	Ofsted Inspector
Frances Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Bruce Waelend	Ofsted Inspector

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