

Blean Primary School

Whitstable Road, Blean, Canterbury, Kent CT2 9ED

Inspection dates

1-2 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The school is led ambitiously and inventively by the headteacher and deputy headteacher working closely with other leaders.
- Pupils achieve very highly in English and mathematics across the school. They make excellent progress. Their writing is of a particularly high standard. They read confidently and accurately.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability achieve very well. The school manages the provision for them excellently.
- Pupils make a good start in the Reception classes. They are taught well. However, the teaching and provision are not yet outstanding and the school is aware of this.
- Teaching is outstanding from Years 1 to 6. Staff assess pupils accurately. They have high expectations of the pupils, who learn very rapidly.
- This is a creative and imaginative school. It has a very rich, broad and exciting curriculum. Pupils learn well in all subjects.
- Pupils are looked after and safeguarded very well. They feel highly safe and secure in the school.
- Pupils are friendly, considerate and polite. They want to learn. Their behaviour is good rather than outstanding because sometimes pupils become fidgety and chat in lessons or run in the corridors.
- Pupils have many superb opportunities to take responsibility and help each other. Their interests and particular talents are often developed excellently.
- In common with their children, parents really like the school. They think it is a brilliant place for their children to be. One said, 'We know how lucky we are'.
- Not all parents, however, feel that their views or reasonable concerns are heard by the school. A very few have found it necessary to pursue lengthy formal complaints, which have intensified rather than being resolved by the school sooner. The parents have concluded that these have not been understood or fairly dealt with.
- The governing body does an excellent job. It both supports and challenges the school to continue improving.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue the work already under way to improve further the teaching and provision in the early years.
- Set clear expectations for behaviour to be outstanding, and support pupils in reaching these.
- Check carefully that parents who raise concerns or complaints are confident that these are valued and considered fairly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher work in a highly effective, close partnership. The deputy headteacher's contribution, at that level, is very strong. Together, they provide compelling, effective, ambitious and visionary leadership, which is respected by staff and most parents.
 - Other senior leaders, including the inclusion manager, also contribute highly effectively in their roles.
 - Middle leaders, responsible for subjects, know what is expected of them. They feel empowered to lead and set down the standards expected in their subjects. They check that these are being well taught.
 - The 'Forum' is a dynamic, expert, passionate and creative group of middle leaders. These staff proactively develop the curriculum so that it is challenging and exciting for the pupils. Lessons across all the subjects are exciting and engaging. There is a very good range of opportunities for learning outside the classroom, including activities and matches after school. The curriculum constantly evolves and is refreshed.
 - The school promotes each strand of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development very well. Pupils are reflective; they can articulate clearly and aptly what this means to them.
 - The school evaluates itself accurately. These evaluations lead to precise and robust improvement planning. Staff and governors are clear about what is being improved, how this is monitored, and what actions they need to take.
 - The school monitors the quality of teaching very carefully. Staff receive very useful feedback on their work and make improvements. Senior leaders ensure that there are no significant weaknesses in the teaching; all classes and year groups are well taught.
 - The breakfast and after-school clubs are very well managed and are an intrinsic part of the work of the school. This provision is of high quality.
 - The school spends and evaluates its pupil premium and sports funding excellently. It can show very positive impact of both sets of expenditure.
 - The school has improved its work with parents considerably. Parents are very pleased indeed with the school. They appreciate the ready availability of staff. They feel that their children are really thriving, with good reason. For the most part, they say that the school provides them with very good information, albeit from a wide range of sources, so it is sometimes possible to miss some things. Several parents value the 'tea and topics' information sessions that staff lead for them. The website is informative and easy to navigate.
 - For the most part, the school listens carefully to comments from parents, and acts upon these. One parent spoke for many when saying, 'It is easy to contact the school and get helpful responses'. However, this is not a universal view. In a very few recent cases, complaints from parents have escalated and led to more serious and clearly unpleasant situations. In these cases, the parents have felt, with some justification, that the school in following its procedures did not show that it valued or acted helpfully on their concerns. In the questionnaires returned to inspectors, some other parents commented that, although they really like the school, they have nevertheless found it sometimes too defensive or unwilling to acknowledge constructively their concerns.
 - The school inducts newly qualified teachers very well, improving their skills. The school also supports the development of student teachers and other students, using their skills to pupils' advantage. For example, during the inspection, Japanese students brought an extra international dimension to the curriculum.
 - The local authority supports the school well. The headteacher also makes very good use of external consultant support as a 'sounding board'. The EduCant Collaboration partnership of local schools is very useful in helping to bring about improvement.
- **The governance of the school**
- The governing body is very well organised and led by an experienced Chair of the Governing Body. While being supportive of the headteacher and staff, governors challenge the school to improve very robustly. They expect further improvements to occur and are clear in stating their expectations. Despite the school's success, they keep themselves and the school leaders on their toes, always looking for better.

- Governors are very well trained. They have very good levels of skill and experience for their roles. They visit the school often and in well-planned ways that are carefully linked to the school improvement plan. Thus, they are very clear about how well the school is doing. Governors work closely with staff, especially in helping in the development of the school improvement plan.
 - Governors ensure that the performance management of the headteacher and staff is carried out constructively and properly.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior staff and governors ensure together that there are clear and appropriate procedures for keeping the pupils safe. These take account of relevant and recent guidance as well as parents' views. Members of staff are well trained and clear about what they need to do in different eventualities. Proper checks are made on staff and other adults when they are recruited and as needed. These are recorded clearly and accurately. The school site is appropriately secure. Staff assess carefully and mitigate the main risks associated with school activities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teaching across the school is of a consistently high standard. It is stimulating and creative. Pupils really enjoy the lessons.
- In one very imaginative and successful lesson observed, Year 6 pupils developed further their already strong understanding of the work of the artist Kandinsky. They produced very high-quality sketches and paintings based on his work while listening to the music of Mahler. Most impressively, the whole lesson was taught in the Spanish language, which pupils learn in school, with the pupils all responding in this language. This was highly efficient, demanding and enjoyable learning for them.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils are high. They provide different work and levels of help very effectively to suit the different learning needs of pupils. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, the teacher skilfully adjusted the tasks for different groups and ensured that she and the teaching assistant asked pupils challenging questions at various levels of sophistication. Pupils explained well how they had solved problems for themselves and made substantial progress in their learning.
- The school operates a very effective, carefully planned programme of teaching in phonics (linking letters and sounds). Reading and writing are taught especially well. The school has a very well-resourced library. Mathematics is also very well taught.
- Teachers demonstrate deep subject knowledge. This leads to them giving clear and accurate explanations. They asked penetrating questions to check pupils' understanding and improve their thinking. Teachers use technical subject language correctly and pupils often show good understanding of it.
- Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively. They know, as appropriate, which pupils they are supporting and why. They make a strong contribution to pupils' rapid learning.
- Staff use humour well. They often set work with contexts that they know pupils will enjoy. For instance, a lesson about linguistic contractions was linked to *Shrek*, who was said to be puzzled by them. The pupils had to help him to understand better. A science lesson was effectively introduced with a problem: the Queen needed peas to make soup, but her peas had died. How could she put this right?
- In the 'Learning Zone' activities at the start of each day, pupils follow up independently any marking corrections or suggestions and improve their work. They are then ready for new learning.
- Pupils usefully take responsibility for their learning by applying the school's own 'learner standards'.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are looked after well and their achievements are widely and well celebrated. They feel very safe, secure and well supported. Adults listen to them carefully. Class 'worry boxes' are very effective in helping pupils deal with any concerns.

- The school has very strong and effective procedures for supporting any pupils and families who may become especially vulnerable. It acts decisively and quickly. Where needed, staff involve external agencies helpfully.
- Pupils have many opportunities to take on responsibilities and for their opinions to be heard. They like this. The school council does much useful work and all pupils can influence it. Other examples are the school captains, eco-group leaders, safety officers, reading buddies, mentors and e-safety wizards. One pupil said that a good captain is, 'polite, helpful and helps younger pupils to smile'.
- Bullying is very rare in the school, and pupils agree that this is true. It is sorted out by staff. Pupils benefit from lessons about avoiding racism and homophobic behaviour. This helps prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils understand very well about how to keep safe when out and about, on roads and on the internet.
- The school develops fundamental British values, such as democracy and tolerance, explicitly and highly effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are happy, polite and friendly. Many enjoy greeting others, with a smile, in Spanish.
- Pupils are interested in their lessons and usually take part keenly and confidently. They are punctual and have their equipment organised. They listen carefully to their teachers and to each other, usually settling down to their work quickly.
- In all classes, pupils carry out worthwhile tasks, very carefully and with minimal supervision, such as giving out resources or collecting books.
- Pupils readily accept the yellow and red card systems, which staff use to deal with any misbehaviour. They see it as fair and say that behaviour in lessons is good and improving.
- On some occasions, however, pupils become distracted in class and start to fidget. Sometimes, they fiddle with each other's hair or start to chat. Teachers usually deal with such incidents, but this slows down the lessons concerned. Inspectors observed a few pupils running in corridors and the hall.
- In the assembly observed by inspectors, which was led in a lively way by a Year 5 class, pupils were noisy and fidgety as they entered and left the hall and at times during the assembly itself.
- Pupils enjoy playtimes. They use the wide range of equipment provided in the different playground zones sensibly and with appropriate care for others.
- Attendance is above average and improving for all groups of pupils. The school has good systems for encouraging better attendance. The rate of exclusion is very low.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Consistently, over time, pupils do very well indeed in national tests and assessments in English and mathematics. All groups of pupils achieve very well and make excellent progress across the school in Key Stages 1 and 2. Many pupils attain very highly. They attain notably better than the national average at all stages, including in the Year 1 phonics screening.
- The school is able to show clearly that pupils in each current year group are making rapid progress in English and mathematics. The school can also show that pupils are able to consolidate and reinforce the skills they have learned, so that their learning is secure.
- The pupils who read to inspectors did so with great accuracy and confidence. When necessary, they applied their knowledge of phonics (letters and their sounds) very well. They were able to discuss their reading with interest and explain in detail the motivations and qualities of the characters. Their comprehension was very good.
- The quality of pupils' writing is very high across the school. Pupils form letters well, usually write accurately using appropriate grammar, and present their work tidily. They choose interesting and relevant vocabulary.
- The school does not yet formally assess pupils in the subjects beyond English and mathematics. However, there is strong evidence that pupils learn and achieve very well in these subjects.
- Pupils entitled to the support of pupil premium funding achieve excellently. Generally, they achieve better than all pupils on average do nationally, which is very commendable.

- Pupils with special educational needs or disability achieve very well, as do those who speak English as an additional language. Interventions and specific provision designed to help these pupils are very effective. The school checks carefully how well pupils do as a result.
- Pupils who show high ability in any particular area are usually challenged highly and can achieve very well. This applies in English and mathematics, but also in other disciplines such as the arts, sport and science.
- Pupils are prepared very well indeed for their secondary education.

Early years provision

is good

- Teaching is good in the Reception classes and particularly so in literacy and phonics (linking letters and sounds). Teachers have high expectations. Learning activities are challenging for the children and help them to learn well. Children in all groups make good progress from their starting points. Most reach a good level of development and are well prepared to move into Year 1.
- Children's writing is very good for their age. They form letters very well. They write interesting and imaginative sentences and phrases. Often, these include appropriate punctuation.
- In some cases, however, teachers' high expectations mean that activities are too difficult for some children, who then make less progress than they could. For example, in one lesson seen, some children were asked to carry out some sentence writing which they were not quite ready to do by themselves. They floundered somewhat and lost interest.
- Both Reception classrooms are vibrant and attractive. Role-play areas are well planned and used. Children really enjoyed using the 'Minibeasts Investigation Lab'. The Chinese New Year was well celebrated in an attractive display. The outdoor area is well organised and enticing.
- Resources are usually available to children but not always. For example, in one case, getting whiteboards organised took quite some time and delayed the lesson. Inspectors noted other examples of time being used inefficiently with children sometimes having to wait for long periods for the next activity.
- The children are looked after well. Their safety is a constantly high priority for adults. Safeguarding procedures are appropriate and properly carried out.
- Children behave, interact and cooperate together well. They are highly motivated and open to new learning. They respond well to adults' good questioning. One child, for example, enjoyed being challenged to say letter names of which he was unsure.
- In general, adults assess children appropriately and thoroughly. These assessments are linked clearly to lesson- and topic planning. Children's learning journals show evidence of a good range of learning across all the necessary areas. However, the journals seen by inspectors showed less about children's mathematics than they did for other learning areas. This is shown better in their recently started mathematics books.
- There is little evidence of significant involvement of parents in the processes of assessment and planning. Nevertheless, staff engage with parents frequently to discuss and explain the children's learning. Parents take part very usefully in 'stay and play' sessions, working with their children in the classrooms.
- On occasion, children's opportunities to make choices and participate in learning that they initiate themselves are limited. Insufficient time is sometimes given to these activities. Inspectors observed children making quite stereotyped choices of activity, without very clear structure or guidance. The school knows that this aspect needs some further attention and is addressing it.
- The newly appointed leader of the early years provision is aware of areas that can be improved further. She is working effectively with other staff to make and embed further changes. She is very usefully line managed by the headteacher while another senior leader is on maternity leave.

School details

Unique reference number	118356
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10011121

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	427
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hugh Samuelson
Headteacher	Lynn Lawrence
Telephone number	01227 471254
Website	www.bleanprimary.org.uk
Email address	enquiries@blean.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 July 2011

Information about this school

- This is a large primary school with two forms of entry. It is located in a village on the edge of Canterbury. Many members of the governing body work in higher education.
- Most pupils in the school are of White British heritage. Many other ethnic groups are represented in the school, each in fairly small numbers.
- A smaller proportion than average of pupils is considered to be disadvantaged and entitled to the support of pupil premium funding.
- An average proportion of pupils have special educational needs or disability.
- A significant number of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school readily meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.
- The school offers breakfast and after-school provision, providing care from 7.30am to 6pm.
- Blean is an active member of a local cluster of primary schools, EduCant.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all of the classes, some jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. They looked at samples of pupils' work and observed at playtimes, lunchtimes and during an assembly.
- The inspection team held meetings and discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, members of staff, governors and two representatives of the local authority. They met also with groups of pupils and heard some pupils read. They considered the responses by pupils to Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- Inspectors took careful account of the views of parents. They met with groups of parents. They considered the 124 responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. They took account of written comments from many parents.
- The inspection team scrutinised many key documents. These included the school's strategic plans and evaluations, records related to the quality of teaching, information about how well pupils are faring academically and minutes of meetings.

Inspection team

Robin Hammerton, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rosemary Addison	Ofsted Inspector
Darren Aisthorpe	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Garratt	Ofsted Inspector
Liz Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector

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