

Bryony School

Marshall Road, Rainham, Gillingham, Kent ME8 0AJ

Inspection dates 4–6 May 2016

Overall effectiveness **Inadequate**

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The proprietors, one of whom is the headteacher, have not ensured that pupils are kept safe at all times. Leaders have not conducted the required pre-employment checks or checks on current staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.
- The school's work to provide for pupils' welfare, health and safety is inadequate because it does not comply with some of the independent school standards.
- The early years provision is inadequate because checks on staff are not rigorous enough to ensure children are safeguarded. The outdoor area is not used effectively to enable children to make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is overgenerous. The quality of teaching is poorly monitored.
- Leaders have not taken action to reduce risks and hazards. External lighting at the junior school site is insufficient, as is the lighting in the Year 6 girls' changing room. The medical room does not meet requirements. Pupils have had accidents when using the cellar steps to access the cloakroom. Staff supervision of pupils using the steps is inconsistent.
- The complaints policy does not fully meet regulations.
- Governance is ineffective. It does not hold the school effectively to account.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is good. Pupils enjoy their lessons because experienced teachers enable them to make good progress. By the end of key stage 2, pupils attain well above the national average. Almost all pass the examinations needed to attend grammar schools.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, children develop effective skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Almost all children reach a good level of development.
- Pupils behave well both in lessons and around the school. They treat each other with respect.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Take immediate action to improve the safety and welfare arrangements for pupils in the school, including those in the early years by:
 - diligently conducting all the necessary checks on current staff
 - ensuring pre-employment checks are thoroughly administered
 - making sure that the single central record complies with statutory requirements
 - ensuring that the medical accommodation in the junior school is large enough to treat pupils and is close to a toilet and washbasin
 - improving the lighting in the junior school, particularly the lighting in the Year 6 girls' changing room, and making sure that there is sufficient external lighting
 - reducing areas of potential risk in the junior school and ensuring that staff supervise pupils when they access the cellar cloakrooms.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - fully implementing the independent school standards
 - ensuring senior leaders evaluate the school's effectiveness accurately
 - implementing a rigorous system to monitor the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that pupils, including the most able, make the strongest possible progress
 - ensuring there is an adequate complaints policy that fully meets the regulations
 - enabling governance to comprehensively hold the school to account.

- Ensure that the early years outdoor area is put to best use to support children's progress in all the areas of learning.

- The school must meet the following independent school standards.
 - The proprietor must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and that such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7, 7(a) and 7(b)).
 - The proprietor must ensure that appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified (paragraph 16, 16(b)).
 - The proprietor must ensure that the medical fitness of all staff is checked in relation to their ability to carry out their duties (paragraph 18(2)(a)(b) and 18(2)(c)(ii)).
 - The proprietor must carry out appropriate checks to confirm the person's right to work in the United Kingdom, check to establish whether [in relation to each member of staff ("S")], S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction; in relation to each member of staff ("S"), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed (paragraph (18)(2)(c)(iii), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(b)).
 - Ensure suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils which includes accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils and is near to a toilet facility (paragraph 24(1)(a)(b)).
 - The proprietor must ensure that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured (paragraph 25).
 - The proprietor must ensure that the lighting in each room is suitable for the nature of the activities which normally take place therein. That external lighting is provided so that pupils can safely enter and leave the premises (paragraph 27(a)(b)).

- The proprietor must ensure that the complaints policy ensures that where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 33(g)).
- Ensure that leaders have sufficient skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently. To ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities effectively and actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1)(a)(b)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leadership, including governance, is inadequate because pupils are exposed to unnecessary risks in relation to their welfare, health and safety. This has a negative impact on the culture of the school. Leaders have not kept up to date with the current statutory requirements regarding the independent school standards. Standards relating to the suitability of staff and the adequacy of the premises have not been met. Some parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, expressed concerns regarding leadership and pupils' well-being.
- Pre-employment checks on staff are incomplete, thereby exposing pupils to possible risk. Significantly, there have been no checks to ensure that teachers are not prohibited or barred from teaching. The proprietors have not checked whether staff have been disqualified from working with children through association with unsuitable adults. The single central record is missing other important information such as the medical fitness of staff.
- School leaders have an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness because they do not know, or have not taken into account, all the information available to them. Important aspects of the school's work have been poorly monitored or simply overlooked. For example, leaders did not know the key stage 2 results in writing last year. Teaching is not monitored closely enough. In the past 18 months there have been no recorded visits to lessons in the junior school.
- Several standards relating to the junior school premises have not been met. Leaders have not done enough to mitigate against the issues relating to the site. This has had a negative impact on pupils' well-being. Pupils are particularly unhappy about the cloakrooms, which are situated down steep steps into a cellar. There are no markings on the steps and accident records over the last two years show pupils have fallen and sustained injuries. The school says that a member of staff is always on duty at the top of the steps when pupils are using them. However, on one day during the inspection there was no one supervising the steps.
- There is insufficient external lighting at the junior school to ensure that pupils are safe. In addition, it is impossible for girls in Year 6 to put on a light in their changing rooms.
- The complaints policy is not compliant. It does not ensure that when there is a panel hearing one member of the panel is independent of the management and running of the school.
- The curriculum promotes British values effectively and pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The curriculum meets pupils' academic needs. It provides them with a firm foundation to develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics. There is a rich programme of extra-curricular activities. The varied and interesting curriculum has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is not effective. It consists of just the two proprietors, one of whom is the headteacher.
 - There is no systematic challenge to the school. Those responsible for governance have not acted to address the areas that need to be rapidly improved.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is good despite inadequate leadership. This is because teachers are committed and highly experienced. Strong teamwork among themselves ensures that they are effective in helping pupils make good progress.
- Teachers usually have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They are skilled at providing carefully tailored work so that each pupil can make good progress.
- Reading is promoted effectively. Phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is taught carefully to the younger pupils and this enables them to make good progress. In the infant school, pupils enjoy visits from the local library bus and this helps them to develop an early love of reading. By Year 6, pupils are avid readers and they talk confidently about their favourite authors.
- Pupils have many opportunities to practise their writing skills across a range of subjects. For example, in history they wrote detailed accounts of what it was like to be an evacuee in Britain during the Second World War. Teachers provide tasks that match pupils' needs and interests. Because of this, pupils are enthusiastic about their writing.

- Mathematics is well taught. Teachers have high expectations and good subject knowledge. Pupils make good progress because teachers plan lessons that carefully develop their understanding of mathematical concepts. Staff give pupils many opportunities to problem-solve and apply their mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum. For example, in science pupils had to investigate the right size of parachute for the weight it needed to carry.
- All of the independent school standards for teaching, learning and assessment are met.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. This is because not all of the independent school standards relating to pupils' welfare and safeguarding are met.
- Arrangements to ensure pupils' physical well-being are inadequate. The junior school premises contain potential hazards to pupils' safety. The medical room is in a locked cupboard which stores teaching resources. The space is not large enough to be used for treatments or therapy. It is situated away from a toilet and washbasin, which are down a corridor and several stairs.
- Pupils have been taught how to stay safe. For example, they know how to stay safe when using bicycles on the road. Pupils in the infant school have had visits from local fire officers to teach them how and when to contact the emergency services in the event of a fire.
- Staff have worked hard to ensure that pupils are aware of how to stay safe online. Pupils say that teachers have impressed upon them the importance of telling an adult if they have any concerns.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Although some parents expressed concerns, pupils say that bullying is rare. School records show very few incidents occur. Pupils are very knowledgeable about what constitutes bullying and say that their teachers would sort out any concerns they might have.
- Pupils talk about the importance of respect and tolerance of different faiths and religions. They say that teachers give them a good understanding of different world faiths such as Sikhism and Judaism.
- In lessons pupils work in a calm and purposeful atmosphere. They are self-confident and their good attitudes to learning are reflected in carefully presented work. Pupils take pride in their achievements.
- In both the infant and the junior school there are strong relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils say that staff are always on hand to talk through any problems they have.
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality are good.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress from their starting points.
- At the end of key stage 1 in 2015, pupils attained well above the national average. All pupils reached the expected levels for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. An above average proportion attained the higher Level 3 in writing.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education. In 2015, pupils in Year 6 attained results which were much higher than the national average. All pupils reached the expected standard for their age in reading, writing, mathematics, spelling, punctuation and grammar. The proportion of pupils who reached the higher levels of attainment was well above the national average.
- Those pupils who are most able achieve well. Some pupils last year reached the highest standards possible for Year 6 pupils in reading, spelling, punctuation and grammar. While teachers do set challenging work for the most-able pupils, this is not consistent. In some lessons pupils could be further stretched. Teachers are not given the support by leaders to fully extend the most able.
- There are very few pupils in the school who are identified as having special educational needs or disability. An analysis of their books shows that these pupils make good progress from their starting points, particularly in writing.
- Some pupils who join the school at different points during the year need to catch up. They receive effective support from both teachers and learning support assistants to ensure that they make rapid progress. Their books clearly show that these pupils make rapid progress in all subjects.

- In the infant school pupils demonstrate a good understanding of basic French vocabulary. As they move through to the junior school, their skills develop and they begin to show an understanding of verb structures and tenses.
- Pupils demonstrate effective skills in thinking scientifically. They have a good understanding of terms such as 'mass' and 'force'.

Early years provision

is inadequate

- Appropriate checks have not been undertaken to ensure that staff in early years are suitable to work with children. This potentially compromises children's safety and means that overall the early years provision is inadequate.
- Children start in the early years with skills and knowledge which are above those typical for their age. They make strong progress in developing early literacy and mathematical skills throughout the Nursery and Reception classes. Typically, all children reach a good level of development. This is because teachers plan carefully together to ensure that children's learning moves forward rapidly. Those children who are more able are challenged further with well-designed activities. As a result, children are well prepared to continue their learning in Year 1.
- In the Nursery classes, teachers plan activities that capture children's interests. They are given experiences that carefully develop their social and emotional development. Regular phonics teaching ensures that even the youngest children make good progress in recognising letters and mastering their grip of writing tools.
- In the Reception classes, children's skills are developed further. They make good progress in writing words and short sentences. Addition and subtraction skills in mathematics are developed through numerous practical activities.
- There are strong links between home and school. Parents praise the detailed information they receive from staff about their child's academic and personal progress.
- Children play well together. They settle quickly to tasks and their behaviour is good.
- The outdoor area provides opportunities for children to develop their physical skills. However, it is not well enough developed to help children make the best possible progress in other areas of learning.

School details

Unique reference number	118979
Inspection number	10008568
DfE registration number	887/6001
Type of school	Preparatory
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	188
Proprietors	David and Marie Edmunds
Headteacher	David Edmunds
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,593–£6,103
Telephone number	01634 231 511
Website	bryonyschool.org.uk
Email address	office@bryonyschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 February 2010

Information about this school

- Bryony Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school. There are currently 188 boys and girls on roll aged from two to 11.
- The school was first registered with the Department for Education in 1956. It was last inspected in 2010 when the school was judged to provide a good standard of education. The school is owned by Mr and Mrs Edmunds and Mr Edmunds is the headteacher.
- The school operates on two sites which are about two miles apart. The site at Marshall Road is a large house in a residential area. It caters for pupils from two to seven years old. Currently, there are 99 pupils on roll. There are two Nursery classes with 35 mainly part-time children. In the two Reception classes there are 21 full-time children. Additionally, there are two Year 1 classes and two Year 2 classes.
- The second site at Meresborough Road is for pupils aged from seven to 11 years old. This site is based in a rural location in a former farmhouse with additional outbuildings. There are eight classes and currently 89 pupils are on roll. All pupils have a form teacher who takes them for registration. For the rest of the day, pupils are taught by specialist teachers in English, mathematics, science, physical education, religious education, music, art, information technology, French and personal, health and social education.
- The school is non-selective. It aims to create a friendly, nurturing environment. It aims to treat each child as an individual who receives a sound education, to enable them to gain entry to grammar schools in Medway or Kent.
- The school operates minibuses in the mornings and evenings. They are used to collect pupils from near their home and take them to first the infant school and then the junior school. Those parents who do collect their children from school primarily collect them from the infant school site.
- There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- There has been no significant change since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a range of subjects. There were 15 lessons and part lessons visited, some of which were observed jointly with senior staff.
- Meetings were held with pupils. Inspectors looked at work in books and listened to some pupils reading. There were also informal discussions with pupils at breaktime regarding what it was like to be a pupil at this school.
- Inspectors took account of 32 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and also spoke to parents at the end of the school day.
- Staff responses from 23 staff questionnaires were also considered.
- Inspectors undertook activities to check compliance with the independent school standards. They looked at a range of documentation and policies including information about pupils' current attainment and progress. Documents related to checking the quality of teaching and learning and records relating to behaviour, attendance, child protection and safeguarding were also examined.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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