

Salmestone Primary School

College Road, Margate, Kent CT9 4DB

Inspection dates

6–7 July 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The new executive headteacher has driven rapid improvements since January. However, previously improvement was slower. Positive changes have not had time to have sufficient impact on pupils' achievement throughout the school.
- Although outcomes in early years are now strong, some older children did not get off to such a good start. Less effective teaching and frequent changes of teacher during the last academic year also led to gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. Better teaching has meant that pupils are catching up and making expected progress in most year groups, but too few are making good progress.
- The most able pupils are not achieving high enough standards. Not enough is expected of them.
- Although teaching is improving, it is variable and not enough is securely good. Teachers do not consistently use assessment information to plan tasks that build on pupils' prior learning well enough.
- The focus on improving outcomes in English and mathematics has limited pupils' opportunities to develop skills in other subjects, including science.
- Governors do not offer good levels of challenge and support to senior leaders. They do not monitor key indicators of the quality of the school's work closely.
- Senior leaders and governors have an over-optimistic view of the school's effectiveness. They have seen improvements in leadership and teaching and assumed that pupils have been making good progress when some groups have not.

The school has the following strengths

- The interim executive headteacher has strengthened systems and raised expectations. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving.
- The school has good opportunities to collaborate with other schools in the trust. Pupils and teachers benefit from this engagement because good practice is shared.
- Senior and middle leaders are responding well to new ideas and opportunities. Their plans show how they are determined to promote further improvement.
- Pupils' progress is accelerating in all years as better teaching takes effect.
- Children make a good start to their learning in early years. The good practice in that key stage has spread into Year 1.
- Behaviour has improved considerably. Pupils feel safe and enjoy their learning.
- The school works well with a range of other organisations to meet the diverse needs of its pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics in order to improve outcomes for pupils by ensuring that:
 - teachers have an accurate understanding of what pupils already know and can do and adapt tasks to meet their needs
 - the tasks teachers plan offer sufficient challenge so that the most able pupils achieve the higher levels
 - teaching provides clear guidance on how to improve, through effective feedback to pupils about their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - improving governors' capacity to offer strong and precise challenge to leaders
 - ensuring that the school's website meets statutory requirements, including analysing and publishing the impact of additional funding on raising attainment for disadvantaged pupils
 - ensuring that leaders robustly and accurately evaluate their work, using a wide range of evidence and taking into account the progress of all groups of pupils
 - developing the curriculum to improve pupils' achievement in a range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The school improved steadily in the year immediately after the inspection, but not at a fast enough rate to bring about the required standards of teaching and achievement. The Kemnal Academies Trust deployed a successful headteacher from a local school from the same trust to the post of interim executive headteacher in January 2016.
- The executive headteacher set about speeding up the rate of improvement of teaching and learning and has gone some way towards making up for lost time. Under his determined and clear direction, leaders are successfully implementing a range of effective strategies and better ways of working; many are still quite new and only recently making a difference. Improvements are apparent. However, the school is still at a catch-up stage to make up for previous weaknesses and a relatively low starting point.
- Leaders, including governors, show pride in their achievements and have high expectations of themselves and others. They are excited by the recent changes and the positive response by pupils. Sometimes this leads to inflated judgements of the quality of some aspects of the school's work. Although monitoring of teaching and reviews of pupils' work take place regularly, there is not enough robust analysis of how well pupils are learning and the impact of actions taken on the quality of teaching.
- School leaders are only tracking the progress of a few most-able pupils. In one year group, this was only one pupil, and three in another. The school uses attainment levels at the end of key stage 1 to identify those regarded as 'academically more able' as they progress through key stage 2. Since previously there was underachievement, some pupils with the potential to achieve highly are not being set high enough targets, nor stretched during lessons, as expectations are too low.
- The curriculum covers a broad range of subjects, but it is not well balanced. A focus on improving outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics has limited the time and emphasis placed on other subjects, including science and modern foreign languages. Skills in science are not systematically developed. Teachers with responsibility for other subjects, including science, are beginning to benefit from collaboration with staff in other trust schools. Plans are in place for a revamped curriculum from September, which is designed to integrate a broader range of subjects more successfully.
- Some subjects, including information technology, art and drama, are varied and interesting. Pupils' artwork is displayed attractively around the school and pupils obviously enjoy their participation in musical and other performing arts events. The curriculum supports pupils' moral and social development well. Pupils were keen to tell inspectors about the school's three core values of aspiration, respect and confidence. They showed consideration for each other. Pupils enjoy learning about different faiths and cultures, although school leaders acknowledge that there is more to be done to develop spirituality. Pupils' understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, tolerance and respect is strong because these values are reinforced throughout the curriculum.
- Senior leaders have raised aspirations for the pupils by, principally, raising teachers' expectations. This is clearly a school where teachers want pupils to do their best and achieve well. Leaders, driven by the executive headteacher, have achieved greater consistency of approach. Classrooms have expectations clearly displayed for pupils to follow. A new behaviour policy has had a positive impact. Teachers and teaching assistants have developed their skills through well-targeted training. Effective coaching by advisers from the trust has been welcomed, as staff are keen to improve their practice. These actions all contribute to a purposeful working environment, with pupils willing to learn and progress accelerating.
- The assistant head for inclusion, special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and the pastoral leader provide appropriate, compassionate and effective support for a wide and diverse range of pupils. The SENCo checks carefully the impact of steps taken to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Bespoke training is improving the skills of teaching assistants. As a result, most pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are now making progress at a rate similar to that of their peers.
- Leaders have recently ensured that good use is made of the school's additional funding. However, there was no evaluation of the impact of pupil premium expenditure during the last academic year. (This is additional funding from the government for children looked after by the local authority or those eligible for free school meals.) Nevertheless, the gap between disadvantaged pupils' outcomes and those of others narrowed last year. Since January, leaders have been checking that the extra help provided is working. Information about pupils' progress indicates that they are making expected progress, in line with that of other pupils in the school.

- Similarly, the use of primary physical education (PE) and sports funding has improved since January. A PE specialist from a local trust school has supported the development of the curriculum and provided training for staff to improve their teaching of sports and fitness. As a result, participation in extra-curricular sport has increased.
- Most staff and parents support the school's leaders, although a few find the pace of change unsettling and feel that there are some inconsistencies of approach through the implementation of several changes at once.
- The school benefits from being part of The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT) Thanet group. The executive headteacher has introduced effective practice from his similar local school. Specialists from the trust have helped improve middle leadership, teaching and learning, and practice in early years. The executive director of the TKAT Thanet group provides continuity, and this will be needed to maintain the momentum of improvement when a new interim headteacher starts in September.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The local governing body did not meet formally from September 2015 to January 2016. As a result, leaders were not held fully accountable for key activities, such as evaluating the impact of additional funding. Governors did not check performance management decisions to ensure that pay increases for teachers are only awarded when the staff are effective in their work, including securing good achievement among pupils. However, these decisions were ratified by the TKAT board.
 - TKAT offers an additional level of accountability for school leaders, in addition to the local governing body. Every six weeks, leaders are interviewed about the progress of the pupils, but this relies too heavily on performance data to check how well the school is improving. Nevertheless, TKAT leaders are aware of the strengths and remaining weaknesses of the school.
 - Since January, a new local governing body has formed. Additional governors have brought useful and wide-ranging experience, which has increased the capacity to provide appropriate challenge to school leaders. They have some knowledge of the school's data and what it shows, but not in enough depth. They are keen to develop their skills and are participating in training but do not yet ask pertinent questions. However, they are now monitoring the impact of spending of pupil premium funding more carefully.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils feel safe in the school. Staff, who know pupils 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. Pupils speak with confidence about the approaches they have learned to keep themselves safe, particularly regarding online safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- There are too many variations in the quality of teaching between different classes and subjects to secure pupils' good achievement. Although teaching is improving, with more stability in staffing and stronger leadership, not all teachers have consistently high expectations of all pupils, particularly the most able.
- Teachers do not use the information they have about pupils to consistently set work at an appropriate level for pupils. Over time, pupils are not routinely required to complete challenging tasks and this holds back their progress. At other times, pupils are presented with challenging tasks that they are not yet equipped to tackle, or moved on too quickly, before they have a secure knowledge and understanding of the basics.
- Where teaching is most effective, pupils are set tasks that provide plenty of opportunities to deepen learning and they can achieve well. In some classes, activities are well matched to pupils' starting points and questioning extends pupils' understanding and so they make good progress. During a Year 1 lesson on phonics (the sounds that letters represent), teachers and teaching assistants were working well with different groups of pupils, using a consistent approach, based on their particular needs.
- Teachers are building on recent improvements in pupils' behaviour and their positive attitude to learning to plan interesting and varied activities. However, where teachers are less confident in the material they are teaching, they sometimes revert to tight control and management of the class and this limits pupils' freedom to work collaboratively and discuss problems in a lively manner.
- Teaching in mathematics emphasises the accurate use of basic skills. The development of important skills such as mathematical reasoning is not yet strong because teachers pose too few interesting and challenging mathematical problems for pupils to grapple with.

- The teaching of phonics is strong, particularly in early years and Year 1. As a result, pupils are more confident readers. Pupils are increasingly applying their reading skills across all aspects of their learning and are enjoying reading more. The successful use of a new reading programme to help some pupils progress rapidly has fired their enthusiasm.
- Feedback, in accordance with the school's policy, is regular but 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.
- All the teachers in the school are enthusiastic, committed and keen to take on advice about improving the quality of their teaching. Engaging teaching is making up for lost time and there is purposefulness about learning. Teachers are successfully plugging gaps in pupils' learning caused by weaker teaching in the past or frequent changes of teacher. As a result, pupils are enjoying learning and completing work more successfully. One Year 6 pupil said, 'our new Year 6 teachers, who started last September, have made learning exciting'.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and productive. Teachers work closely with their teaching assistants. Teaching assistants know the pupils well. They make a valuable contribution to the care and development of pupils who need to catch up and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, most of these pupils make at least expected progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are respectful and polite. Pupils and parents are pleased with the improvements that the executive headteacher has introduced.
- Pupils feel safe in the school. Through the school's curriculum, they are taught various ways of keeping themselves safe, for example when using the internet or social media. Pupils are confident that if they have a problem, there is always someone to listen and help them. They particularly appreciate the Place2Be counselling offered several days a week. Pupils report that any bullying that does occur is dealt with promptly.
- Older pupils readily accept responsibility to support younger ones. They take their duties very seriously and understand that they are role models and should set the correct example for others. Opportunities to lead, such as being prefects, are treasured.
- Great care is shown to all pupils, including impressive support for those facing challenges. Staff in the school show a relentless determination to help every pupil overcome difficulties they face and this is building the self-confidence of vulnerable pupils. Staff responsible for inclusion show extensive knowledge of the pupils. They work very effectively with a range of outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive the care and support they require.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is a calm, orderly school. Pupils want to behave because they can see benefits in it. They are very keen to show how well they are keeping to the new behaviour policy and often repeat the catchphrase: 'it's good to be green'.
- Consistent application of the new behaviour policy, improved teaching and strengthened support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have all contributed to a fall in exclusions.
- Behaviour at break- and lunchtimes has improved through the provision of a wider range of activities in specified areas of the playground. Good routines have been established in lessons and for movement around the building.
- Occasionally, in lessons, when teaching lacks challenge, some pupils' attention wanes and they lose concentration.
- Attendance has improved and is now in line with national levels. However, despite appropriate and persistent action by the school, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains low.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- The progress of pupils from their different starting points varies too much across year groups and within subjects for outcomes to be good overall. However, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are now making better progress than in the past. Outcomes are higher in reading and writing than mathematics. The most able pupils do not make enough progress.
- Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2015 was well below national levels in reading, mathematics and English, and grammar, punctuation and spelling, and broadly in line in writing. However, progress made by pupils from their starting points showed an improvement on 2014.
- Currently, pupils in Year 6 have gaps in their learning because of previously weaker teaching. There has been a concerted effort to help pupils catch up through a focus on good-quality teaching and learning this year, supplemented by targeted interventions. Overall, most pupils have made at least expected progress from their starting points. Outcomes in writing remain stronger than in reading and mathematics.
- In 2015, the proportion of children in early years who achieved a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year was above the national average. Standards continue to rise, with an even higher proportion on course to reach the expected standard this year.
- In 2015, standards in the Year 1 phonics check were in line with the national average, and higher than in 2014. This improvement has continued this year and the school's information shows that children are acquiring the skills needed for success in reading more rapidly than in the past. During the inspection, pupils in Year 3 read to inspectors with confidence and sensitivity. There is a strong culture of reading developing within the school.
- By the end of key stage 1, last year, pupils' overall attainment improved from the previous year and reached broadly average levels. Current Year 2 pupils have not made consistent progress throughout the year, but recent improvements have accelerated their pace of learning. The school's current information and work in books show that most pupils are on track to achieve age-related expectations.
- In 2015, in both key stages 1 and 2, too few pupils reached the higher levels of attainment. Among current pupils, there is insufficient work of the highest standard in Year 2 and throughout key stage 2. The most able pupils are not consistently stretched in lessons.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well in the school. Their progress is increasing in line with that of other pupils in the school.
- Gaps between the standards achieved by disadvantaged pupils and others in the school are closing. Gaps between other pupils nationally remain significant.
- Pupils are learning to write successfully and are developing secure learning skills, including how to read, check and improve their written work. However, the quality of writing in subjects other than English is not always of the same standard.
- Learning in mathematics requires improvement. There is an emphasis on practising basic skills, and both problem-solving and reasoning skills are underdeveloped. Teachers do not consistently display secure understanding of mathematical concepts. Pupils are not yet confidently applying their knowledge because they are not given enough opportunities to do this.
- Work in books showed that expectations and standards in science are too low. Pupils were regarded as having met learning objectives without being required to use their knowledge and understanding to explain scientific ideas.

Early years provision

is good

- Children enter the early years with skills and abilities that are below those typical for their age. In 2015, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development was above the national average. This represents strong achievement. The school's own information suggests that an even higher proportion of children currently in the early years, including those who are disadvantaged, are on course to achieve a good level of development in 2016.
- This success is due to precise planning by teachers who, together with teaching assistants, assess children's needs accurately and plan activities designed to meet their learning needs closely. Feedback provided to children explains clearly how they can improve their work. This is particularly impressive in Reception Year, where children's progress is rapid. Teaching in Nursery also enables children to develop well and acquire new skills. Some children in Nursery are already writing sentences.

- The early years lead practitioner from TKAT models effective practice. Her high expectations have created a calm and stimulating environment that allows children to thrive.
- The learning environment is well resourced, highly stimulating and supports a good range of play and learning activities. Role-play areas are inviting and stimulate creativity. Wonderful displays reflect the breath of the curriculum and celebrate children's work. The outside area has been enhanced. Children enjoy choosing activities and are engaged, motivated to learn and curious. Resources outside, designed to help prompt children with their reading, writing and mathematics, do not always match the high quality of those seen in the classrooms.
- From the time they enter Nursery, children learn to follow routines and high levels of independence are encouraged. Children were seen busily washing up after themselves and sweeping up of their own accord. Relationships are strong, and children learn to take turns, share and play happily together. This helps to build the confidence of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Children are well prepared for Year 1 and transition is smooth.
- Adults work closely with parents and encourage them to help their children build on their learning at home. Parents who spoke to inspectors were very pleased with the progress their children are making through the early years.

School details

Unique reference number	138438
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10012327

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dave Holland
Headteacher	James Kendall
Telephone number	01843 220949
Website	www.salmestone-tkat.org
Email address	office@salmestone-tkat.org
Date of previous inspection	18–19 June 2014

Information about this school

- Salmestone Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school. There are two classes in each year group from Reception Year to Year 6.
- The early years provision comprises one Nursery and two Reception classes. Children attend Nursery part time and Reception full time.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language are below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children looked after by the local authority and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is around the national average.
- The school is part of The Kemnal Academies Trust's Thanet division. An executive director has oversight of the five primary schools in the group.
- The interim executive headteacher started in January 2016. He is also executive headteacher of another school in the Thanet group, Northdown Primary School, and will be returning there in September. An interim headteacher has been appointed from September 2016. Most members of the governing body, including the chair, have taken up post since January 2016.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school's website does not yet meet requirements on the publication of specified information because it lacks some of the required information about governance. It does not have details of how the school spent the pupil premium funding received for last academic year and how it made a difference to the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons, nine jointly with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the interim executive headteacher, senior and middle leaders and five governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT).
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work, heard pupils read, observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and at lunchtime, and talked informally with staff, pupils and parents.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account the 33 responses on Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also considered the 14 free-text responses submitted by parents. Responses to the 34 online questionnaires completed by staff 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 TKAT, the school's evaluation of its own performance, and the school's development plans.

Inspection team

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