

Buckfastleigh Primary School

Bossell Road, Buckfastleigh, Devon TQ11 0DD

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Over the past two years, too few pupils have achieved the expected standard in writing by the end of Year 6.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly of the most able pupils in mathematics.
- The quality of phonics teaching is variable. As a result, not all pupils are able to use their phonics knowledge to decode unfamiliar words.
- Over time, governors, including trust officers from South Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust, have not been sharp enough in their work in securing positive outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders' plans for improvement, including in performance management processes, do not match the school's priorities closely enough.
- There have been several changes to the teaching team since the previous inspection. As a result, action taken to develop the role of middle leaders has not been effective.
- Early years provision requires improvement. In the Reception class, teaching does not always meet the needs of children.
- Levels of persistent absence are above average and this limits the progress that pupils can make.
- Pupils do not behave as well as they should in class. When they have work that is too easy or too difficult, they do not focus and they create low-level disruption.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher has high expectations and leads the school well. She has galvanised teaching staff and is very clear about what needs to be done to improve the school.
- The curriculum has a well-established focus on developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- The school provides strong pastoral care for pupils so that they feel safe and secure.
- The school's approach to safeguarding is effective.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by making sure that:
 - leaders' plans for improvement link more closely to improving the quality of teaching and learning
 - governors, including trust officers, have a precise picture of the school's effectiveness so they can hold leaders rigorously to account
 - leaders and governors gain an exact understanding of the extent of poor behaviour by pupils and take effective action to eliminate it
 - performance management targets are precise and relevant, so that teachers can develop their practice and be held to account more efficiently
 - leaders develop further the skills of middle leaders so that they can check on and influence improvements in teaching.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve across all subjects
 - providing pupils, particularly the most able, with more opportunities in mathematics to use and apply their skills to deepen their understanding
 - ensuring that all staff have a good understanding of how to teach phonics effectively
 - ensuring that teachers across the school plan activities that are not too hard or too easy for pupils.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and well-being of pupils by:
 - ensuring good behaviours for learning through eradicating low-level disruptive behaviour
 - taking more robust action to improve the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent, so pupils can benefit from their education.

An external review of governance 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

- Since her recent appointment, the acting headteacher has worked efficiently in challenging circumstances. However, significant staff turbulence has prevented the school from establishing other leadership roles to support her. Governance has not been effective in making sure that the school's leadership is robust, including from within the trust. As a result, leadership and management require improvement.
- Due to the underdevelopment of leadership roles, good practices are not being shared to help improve the consistency of teaching. For example, middle leaders have attended training, but have not been able to use their skills in supporting the acting headteacher. As a result, they are not able to challenge weak performance or drive improvement in their area of subject expertise.
- The school's plans for improvement are too detailed and lack clarity in providing precise information about how the impact of the proposed actions will be measured. They do not focus enough on the key priorities for the school, or include clear success criteria that are measurable.
- The performance management of teachers is not effective. The targets leaders set for staff are not precisely focused on bringing about the improvements needed to ensure that the quality of teaching continues to improve. Targets relate to individual year groups and not specific teachers' performance. Furthermore, teaching staff also stated that targets set are not always effective in supporting them to improve their work.
- The acting headteacher has begun to bring about improvements in teaching. She knows where it is weak and is providing support and guidance to help improve practice. However, more needs to be done to secure good teaching across the school.
- Additional funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. In summer 2017, a review of the effectiveness of the use of pupil premium funding has supported leaders, including governors, in ensuring that funds are sharply focused on raising achievement for this group of pupils, including the most able disadvantaged.
- The recently appointed leader of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has precise systems in place to ensure that additional funding for these pupils is well targeted. However, it is too early to be able to report on any discernible impact of her actions.
- Pupils benefit from a variety of activities provided by the additional sport funding. Pupils compete against other local schools from across the 'Dartmoor School Sports Partnership' with a focus on inclusion. Furthermore, funding has been used to develop identified talents through both 'Chelsea Football Academy' and 'Torquay United Football Club'.
- Although it is in its infancy, inspectors observed pupils have a healthy start to the school day during breakfast club.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is enhanced by a range of extra-curricular activities and school visits that pupils reported they enjoy. The curriculum is particularly strong in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils said

that they particularly enjoy the work they do with local and national charities.

- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The school organises a weekly whole-school focus on fundamental British values that permeate throughout the school. As a result, pupils learn how to prepare themselves well for life in modern Britain. A pupil told inspectors, 'Respect and tolerance are what holds this school together.'
- Parents have confidence in the work of the acting headteacher. They said that the school is improving and staff are approachable and listen to concerns. However, a small proportion of parents stated that communication could be improved.
- Pupils themselves also reported how much the school has recently improved. Almost all of them said they would recommend it to others.

Governance of the school

- Over time, governors have not acted swiftly enough to ensure that leadership at the school is good and that the quality of teaching is good. The governing body has not challenged leaders in sufficient time to ensure that pupils' outcomes improve. Too often, governors have accepted leaders' reasons for the school's underperformance.
- The school is part of South Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust and the work of the local governing board is overseen by the trust's board of directors. The challenge provided by this body has not been swift enough to reverse the decline in outcomes or improve the quality of leadership and teaching.
- Governors often visit to audit the school's safeguarding arrangements. The governor responsible for safeguarding regularly checks the school records and systems. This governor has received appropriate training on safeguarding children and the safe recruitment of staff. Governors are knowledgeable about, and are effective in, their roles and responsibilities for keeping pupils safe.
- Governors monitor the impact of additional funding, such as sport funding and pupil premium funding, well. They know how this funding is used and the impact that it is having on pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that systems for safeguarding are robust. Policies and procedures meet statutory requirements and are checked often by the governing body. Scrupulous checks are carried out when recruiting new staff.
- Staff training is effective. For example, when questioned by inspectors, a range of school staff were able to articulate the signs and symptoms to look out for. All staff understand their roles and responsibilities and know they have a duty to be vigilant.
- The acting headteacher is tenacious in her approach to record-keeping. She keeps detailed and accurate records of those pupils who are vulnerable. Actions taken by outside agencies and school staff are recorded diligently on pupils' records to ensure that the needs of pupils are being met.
- The school works well with outside agencies to provide early help to ensure that pupils are safe. Leaders are not afraid to challenge external agencies if they are not satisfied

with their response.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Across a range of subjects, not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve from their starting points. Too often, the work that staff ask pupils to complete is not well matched to pupils' abilities.
- In writing, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. They do not challenge pupils effectively to achieve their very best. Pupils often complete work that does not match their age and they revisit skills that they have already achieved. Some teaching of writing is more effective. Here, teachers encourage pupils to write for extended periods and use their skills across a range of subjects.
- Teacher's expectations are not, in some mathematics lessons, high enough for the most able pupils, and pupils are not being challenged. For example, in some mathematics books, pupils are spending too long practising skills they have already mastered.
- Some adults' subject knowledge of phonics is not secure. For example, pupils are not taught strategies effectively that will help them to use their knowledge of phonics to decode unfamiliar words. As a result, they are not able to move to the next stage of their reading, and their ability to read and write is hindered.
- The teaching of reading is effective in key stage 2. Pupils have regular opportunities to read with an adult. They reported that they feel well supported in the classroom and enjoy developing their comprehension skills through a range of opportunities.
- There are positive relationships between adults and pupils. Consequently, pupils enjoy school. This view was supported by the pupils who completed Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Teaching assistants across the school provide effective support to pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They use questioning well to develop pupils' understanding, and intervene in a timely fashion to ensure that positive progress is being made.
- Where teachers adapt their teaching in response to pupils' learning, activities are well planned to capture pupils' interest and enthusiasm. For example, Year 6 pupils were 'buzzing' to complete their project about the Amazon rainforest, using well-developed skills from across the curriculum. This led to an enthusiastic and mature explanation to inspectors about the future sustainability of the planet.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Although the acting headteacher has started to introduce measures to improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour, a small proportion of pupils throughout the school do not have positive attitudes towards learning.
- Pupils know about different forms of bullying. They said that incidents arise but that staff deal with them swiftly. Pupils said that they feel safe in school because they know

that staff take their concerns seriously. They have full confidence that leaders will ensure that they are safe.

- Pupils are taught within the curriculum how to keep themselves safe in and outside school. They have a clear understanding about the threats to their safety and know how to respond to them if they should occur.
- Pupils have some knowledge of how to live a healthy lifestyle. They appreciate the range of activities provided at break and lunchtimes. However, not all pupils are aware of what foods are healthy and what constitutes a healthy lunchbox.
- Parents, governors and staff believe that pupils are happy and safe in school. The large majority of parents who responded to the survey or spoke to inspectors would recommend the school to other parents.
- Pupils receive regular visits from a range of organisations that help them learn how to keep safe in school and the community.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is because, too frequently, pupils disturb one another's learning when they find the work not well matched to their needs. Too often, pupils lose concentration and chatter to each other while the teacher is talking. This interrupts the flow of learning and slows pupils' progress. They do not always respond quickly enough to teachers' instructions. Consequently, valuable learning time is lost. In discussion with pupils, across a range of year groups, there were complaints that the behaviour of their classmates is not always good and they find it difficult to concentrate at times.
- Pupils' attendance has been improving and is now in line with national averages. The vast majority of pupils attend and arrive at school on time. Leaders continue to work with outside agencies and families to improve the attendance of girls and disadvantaged pupils, who are more persistently absent. This is a concern, because it is affecting their progress, particularly that of girls. Nevertheless, rates of persistent absence are declining.
- Pupils are very friendly, polite and helpful. They said that staff treat them fairly and equally, and they are encouraged to listen and share their different views in lessons. This generates tolerance and mutual respect towards each other.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes in writing by the end of key stage 2 have remained in the bottom 20% of all schools nationally for the past two years. As a result, too few pupils who left the school were well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Outcomes in mathematics for pupils in key stage 2 are too low, particularly those of most-able pupils. This is because, too often, work planned for them is at too low a level and does not build on their prior achievements. There are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills to solving problems that require reasoning, and so they do not develop a greater understanding of what they are learning.
- In 2016, the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities was broadly in line

with national averages. In 2017, by the end of key stage 2, it was below the national average in reading and writing.

- The proportion of pupils achieving the required standard in the phonics screening check has been broadly average. However, school information for 2017 shows that there has been a dip in the proportion of pupils reaching the required standard. There is a similar picture at the end of Year 2 for pupils who did not reach the required standard in the re-check. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in the phonics check by the end of key stage 1 is below the national average.
- Pupils in key stage 1 have mixed attitudes towards reading and this slows progress, particularly that of less-able readers. This is partly because some have reading books that are not suitable for them and partly because they do not have the key skills in phonics to tackle unfamiliar words.
- Pupils in key stage 2, particularly the most able, enjoy reading and they talk enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors. They have a secure range of skills that helps them read texts that are above what would be expected for their age. However, pupils reported that teachers' expectations are low, when they monitor what and how frequently pupils read.
- In 2016 at the end of key stage 1, pupils' progress in writing and mathematics, was below national averages. However, performance information for 2017 shows improvement, and pupils achieved above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The most able achieved above the national average in reading and mathematics.
- In other year groups, progress is slower. Work is not consistently well planned and there is variation in teachers' expectations of behaviour. Pupils do not always respond well to their teachers and this hinders their progress across the curriculum.
- Disadvantaged pupils make better progress than their peers. At the end of key stage 2 in 2017, disadvantaged pupils' progress in reading and mathematics was in line with that of other pupils nationally. However, progress in writing was well below.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The provision requires improvement because teaching is not good, particularly the development of writing skills. Phonics learning is not secure, and children do not apply the skills consistently to their reading or writing. Furthermore, activities do not extend learning sufficiently, and the behaviour of a small proportion of boys is sometimes not as good as it should be.
- In 2016, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was below the national average. However, in 2017, the proportion was broadly average. Children are now being prepared more effectively for life in Year 1, but not all are making good enough progress.
- Leaders ensure that staff receive support from the schools in the trust. However, this is very recent and is yet to have an impact on the quality of teaching. More children need to make at least good progress from their starting points, though improvements are taking shape. Following historical weaknesses and a period of staffing turbulence, leaders are now clear about what is required and how to achieve it.

- Assessment in the Reception class is accurate and based on well-founded evidence. As a result, teachers and support staff know their children well and what they need to achieve next. This allows teachers to plan more effectively to ensure that they meet the needs of the children.
- Children enjoy the learning environment both inside and outside, and their contributions are celebrated. Children are developing into confident learners and have positive social skills. Children were confident to speak to inspectors and share their learning experiences.
- Parents are generally very happy with the provision and said that their children enjoy school and are settled. Parents appreciate the transition arrangements that have been put in place. They value the opportunities to come into school to learn how to support their child at home.
- Safeguarding and welfare requirements are effective. Staff have had appropriate training and are aware of the procedures that are in place to report any concerns they may have.
- Relationships between adults and children are positive. Staff plan activities and support children's learning to develop their independence. Children move from activities that are open ended and stimulating to adult-led activities. This is supporting children to make better progress and challenges their thinking more effectively. However, the recent improvements in the early years have yet to impact on the proportion of children who make at least good progress from their starting points.

School details

Unique reference number	136562
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10037858

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	212
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Beverley Garland
Headteacher	Richard Arundell, Jan Hillman (acting)
Executive Headteacher	Rachel Shaw
Telephone number	01364 643304
Website	www.buckfastleigh.devon.sch.uk
Email address	admin@buckfastleigh.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 March 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is part of South Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust. The school has a local governing body and its work is overseen by trust officers.
- There have been significant changes to both the leadership team and the teaching team since the previous inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' learning and progress.
- Most pupils are White British and few speak English as an additional language.

- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is higher than in most schools.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is in line with the national average.
- The school runs a breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons or part-lessons, most of which were observed alongside school leaders. They also looked at a range of work in pupils' books from across the curriculum.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive of South Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust, the vice chair of the trust board and the local board safeguarding governor.
- Inspectors held meetings with the acting headteacher, executive headteacher, middle leaders and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read from across the school.
- Inspectors took into account 40 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including free-text responses. Additionally, inspectors met with parents informally at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of information provided by school leaders. This included the school's improvement plan, various policies and records of pupils' attendance, behaviour and academic performance.
- Inspectors analysed the responses to the online staff survey and 27 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Matt Middlemore, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Smith	Ofsted Inspector

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