

Brambleside Primary School

Cleveland Avenue, Kettering, Northamptonshire NN16 9NZ

Inspection dates

23–24 January 2018

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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders do not have a sharp enough grasp of the attainment and progress of pupils. As a result, their plans for improvement do not set sharp enough targets to help drive more rapid improvement.
- Leaders and governors do not check closely enough the effectiveness of their actions to improve standards to ensure that they are consistent. They do not hold staff sufficiently to account.
- Leaders do not have a secure enough understanding of standards in the early years to help bring about further improvements.
- At the end of key stage 1 in 2017, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading and, particularly, writing declined compared to the previous year and were below the national averages.
- Some pupils, particularly boys and the most able pupils, sometimes do not make the progress they should.
- Teachers' expectations of the presentation of pupils' work and the accuracy of pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling are inconsistent.
- Teachers sometimes do not use assessment information well to ensure that work is well matched to pupils' abilities. Sometimes, teachers do not provide enough challenge for the most able pupils.
- Teachers do not consistently teach pupils the skills they need in mathematics to develop their reasoning skills and to be effective problem-solvers.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and senior leaders are driving improvements. They are creating a culture of higher expectations.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in 2017 at the end of key stage 2 improved in reading, writing and mathematics compared to the previous year.
- Pupils behave well in lessons, around the school and on the playground. The school has a positive and caring ethos.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. The proportion of pupils achieving the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been above the national averages for the last two years.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:
 - assessment of pupils' progress is accurate and used sharply to identify specific targets to ensure that all groups of pupils, particularly the most able, make consistently strong progress
 - their improvement plans and the management of the performance of leaders and other staff identify specific and measurable targets with clear milestones to achieve to help drive more rapid improvement
 - they more rigorously check the impact of their initiatives to hold staff to account and drive more rapid improvement
 - they improve their expertise and effectiveness in assessing and reviewing standards in the early years to identify how to further improve provision and children's progress
 - actions accelerate the progress of boys to diminish further differences between their attainment and that of girls, particularly in reading and writing.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to improve pupils' progress by ensuring that all teachers:
 - use information about pupils' learning to provide work that is accurately matched to pupils' abilities, particularly the most able
 - teach pupils how to use accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation appropriate to their abilities
 - have consistently high expectations of the quality and presentation of pupils' work in different subjects
 - enable pupils to gain a deeper understanding of mathematics by consistently teaching problem-solving and reasoning skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders do not have a clear enough understanding of attainment and progress across the school. Assessment is not consistently accurate. Their understanding of the strengths and specific areas for improvement for each cohort is not sufficiently sharp. Leaders have not checked carefully enough that pupils' progress is consistent in different classes and subjects. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress they should.
- Leaders' plans for improvement are not sufficiently focused on improving pupils' progress to drive more rapid improvements. Their targets to improve the performance of leaders and teachers are not sharply linked to pupils' outcomes. As a result, improvements in pupils' attainment and progress have not been as consistent or rapid as they could be.
- Leaders have introduced a range of actions to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This has been particularly effective in raising standards in upper key stage 2. However, leaders have not ensured that their actions are embedded consistently across the school. They have not been rigorous enough in checking that all staff are consistently implementing these actions.
- The quality of pupils' work and the progress they make are too variable in different classes and subjects. Some pupils, particularly boys and the most able, sometimes do not make the progress they should.
- The school provides a generally broad and balanced curriculum. Enrichment activities and extra-curricular clubs complement this. Staff ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is generally effective. The school prepares pupils positively for life in modern Britain. However, leaders are aware that pupils' understanding of different religions and some aspects of British values is not as secure as it could be.
- Pupil premium funding has been used largely to provide additional teaching to support pupils' learning. Most disadvantaged pupils make progress in line with, and sometimes better than, other pupils. This was the case at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. Leaders and governors are not, however, as effective as they could be in stringently checking the impact on all children's progress to ensure that the funding has the maximum impact.
- The coordinator for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities ensures that additional funding is used well to support pupils' learning. Pupils generally make good progress from their starting points. The impact of additional support and interventions is also not checked carefully enough to ensure that the funding has the maximum impact.
- Leaders use the additional funding for physical education and sport effectively to support the development of teachers' expertise in teaching physical education, as well as widening pupils' opportunities to engage in sporting activities. Again, however, leaders' plans do not have sharp, measurable outcomes to ensure that the funding is having the maximum impact it should.

- The headteacher has established an increasingly cohesive leadership structure. Middle leaders are increasingly effective in their roles in driving improvements in reading, writing and mathematics. Initiatives to promote positive attitudes to reading and improving pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics, for example, are beginning to have a positive impact. Leaders ensure that the school benefits from working with a teaching school alliance to support this.
- Parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as staff and pupils responding to the separate questionnaires, are overwhelmingly positive in their responses. Parents speak very highly of the headteacher and staff, with some commenting on the positive 'community' atmosphere. Parents say that teachers are friendly and approachable. Pupils and parents say the school keeps pupils safe and pupils enjoy their learning and coming to school. Staff are very positive about working in the school.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is very clear on its role to both support and challenge the school. Governors are knowledgeable and have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas in which it needs to improve. The minutes of their meetings show that they ask challenging questions about different aspects of the school's performance, including the use of the pupil premium. They are not, however, as effective as they could be in holding leaders to account because the targets for improvement are not sharp and measurable enough.
- Governors regularly visit the school to meet with leaders and staff and check standards. They check that the school is meeting safeguarding requirements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders ensure that the single central record of checks on staff, governors and visitors is thorough. The designated leaders for safeguarding ensure that all members of staff are kept up to date with the latest guidance on keeping pupils safe in education.
- Staff are clear on the procedures for reporting any concerns about pupils' welfare. Leaders record these carefully, including the actions taken. They are tenacious in involving external agencies where this is required.
- The school's caring ethos is evident in pupils' positive interactions with teachers and with each other. The school teaches pupils how to keep safe, including when they are online. Pupils say that bullying is very rare and are confident that adults will rapidly resolve any concerns they have. Pupils say they feel safe and almost all parents who spoke with inspectors or who responded to Parent View say their children are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent. While teachers are committed to supporting the headteacher to bring about necessary improvements, they

do not consistently use information about pupils' learning well to ensure that work and their expectations of what pupils can achieve are matched to pupils' abilities. As a result, some pupils, particularly the most able, do not make the progress they should.

- In mathematics, there is evidence of teachers' work to develop pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills by providing 'challenge' questions. However, this is not consistent. The most able pupils are often asked to complete the same work as pupils of average ability. Too often, teachers ask pupils to complete too many examples of work at the same level of difficulty, rather than moving them on to more challenging work.
- Teachers do not have equally high expectations of the presentation of pupils' work or the accuracy of their spelling, grammar and punctuation. Teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils work vary in different subjects. Pupils' work shows that many make frequent and sometimes repeated errors. Teachers sometimes do not give pupils clear enough guidance on how to improve their writing and make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge which they use well to question pupils. Some teachers use questioning very effectively to check pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking. In some lessons, teachers ensure that pupils' learning builds effectively on what pupils know. They use engaging teaching strategies, for example, the use of images and apparatus in mathematics, to take pupils' learning forward.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities often make progress from their starting points that is at least in line with their peers because they receive effective support across the school. Teaching assistants are often deployed well and provide effective support, particularly when working with individual pupils.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and relationships are positive. As a result, pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They apply themselves well in their lessons to all that is asked of them and they concentrate well.
- The quality of phonics teaching in the early years and key stage 1 is effective. Staff teach pupils to articulate, segment and blend sounds well. The impact of school reading initiatives and the teaching of English through carefully chosen class novels are promoting positive attitudes to reading, including for boys, and helping to raise standards.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are polite and confident. They were happy to talk to inspectors about their work and learning. Pupils in key stage 2 spoke enthusiastically about a visiting archaeologist and how they had learned to play a game they had learned about during their topic on the Mayan civilisation. Teachers teach pupils to understand the importance of learning.
- Pupils' personal development is enhanced by the roles and responsibilities the school offers them, such as the house captains, 'bullying representatives' and science and play leaders. They also spoke very positively about the clubs the school provides, such as the gymnastics, dodgeball, reading and homework clubs.
- The school has a strong ethos of respect and pupils clearly like their teachers and other

adults in the school. A pupil in Year 6 told an inspector: 'They are the sort of teachers you can talk to. And the office ladies are nice. All the staff are nice.'

- Pupils are very reflective and understand the importance of respecting others. Some pupils, however, were not as secure as they could be in their understanding of the British values relating to democracy and the understanding of different faiths and religions.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are courteous. Their conduct in classrooms, in corridors and on the playground is excellent. They have a good understanding of school systems to support their behaviour. Parents who spoke with inspectors or responded to Parent View were almost unanimous in their view that pupils are well behaved.
- Leaders and staff have high expectations of behaviour. Pupils know what is expected and staff praise them for their contributions and efforts. Leaders have not ensured, however, that expectations of the presentation of pupils' work are consistently high.
- In lessons, pupils pay attention, concentrate and try hard to complete all that is asked of them. They only lose focus when they are unsure or work is not matched well to their ability or needs.
- Overall attendance has been above the national averages for the last two years. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils improved in 2017 compared to the previous year. However, leaders are aware that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is below that of other pupils and pupils nationally. Leaders check attendance carefully and work with the families of pupils who have persistent absence.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The progress that pupils make is inconsistent. As a result of leaders' and staff's actions, pupils' attainment and progress in 2017 at the end of key stage 2 improved for reading, writing and mathematics compared to the previous year. Progress was broadly average. Pupils' attainment in reading and, particularly, writing at the end of key stage 1, however, declined. Current pupils' work shows that, while many pupils are making good progress, this is too variable in different classes, subjects and groups of pupils.
- Where teachers give pupils work appropriate to their needs, particularly in key stage 2, pupils make strong progress. Pupils' work across the school, however, shows that teachers sometimes do not ensure that pupils have enough opportunities to deepen and practise their English and mathematics skills sufficiently well.
- Pupils' work shows that pupils are given increasing opportunities to write at length. However, the quality of pupils' work is inconsistent. The often-strong content of their writing is let down by poor grammar, punctuation and spelling. Teachers are not consistent and rigorous in ensuring that pupils can use these accurately.
- In 2017, the attainment and progress of boys in key stages 1 and 2 were often well below those of girls, particularly for reading and writing. Reading initiatives are promoting positive attitudes to reading. Pupils, including boys, are reading in more

depth because teachers match books more carefully to their abilities. However, leaders are not sharp enough in carefully tracking the progress of boys to ensure that their actions are rapidly diminishing differences.

- Leaders and teachers identify pupils who need to catch up. They regularly discuss and review the progress of different groups of pupils. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is generally in line with that of their peers. The coordinator for provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is able accurately to identify pupils who need early help. Pupils make secure progress from their starting points.
- The proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development in the early years has been close to the national average for the last two years. The proportion of pupils achieving the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been above the national average for the last two years. Attainment in key stage 1 mathematics was close to the national average in 2017.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Leadership of the early years is not sharp enough in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders do not have a strong enough understanding of the early years. Leaders have not checked that assessments of children's starting points and progress are accurate. They do not effectively use information about children's learning to create focused plans for how they will further improve provision in the different areas of learning to ensure that all children make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers provide activities that are generally well planned and engaging. Activities offer a range of learning opportunities across different areas of the curriculum. Leaders have not ensured, however, that activities are sufficiently challenging. Some activities lack a clear learning focus. Consequently, some children, particularly the most able, do not make the progress they could.
- School information suggests that some children enter the early years with skills that are below those expected for their age. By the end of the Reception Year, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been in line with the national average for the last two years. Children's learning journey records and school information show that most children, including those who are disadvantaged, make secure progress. Most children are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Teachers and adults are enthusiastic. They are effective in using questioning to encourage children and support their learning and development. Children show independence and perseverance. A group of children explained to an inspector, for example, the decisions they were making in deciding how to design and write a card for their parents.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Children were observed, for example, independently applying their phonics skills well to write simple sentences. Inspectors observed many very capable children and saw evidence of high standards of language. One child, for example, told an inspector, 'It's a silver, sparkly box. It's a magic doubling box.' Children talk positively and confidently about what they are doing and about their learning.
- Staff support children's personal development, behaviour and welfare well. Behaviour is

good and children have positive relationships with each other and adults. Children follow instructions and show independence in their learning because adults have established effective routines.

- Parents are very positive about their children's experiences in the early years. They contribute to their children's ongoing assessments and speak highly of the opportunities the school provides for parents to understand how children learn in the early years. Many spoke highly of the phonics workshop, for example.
- The safeguarding and welfare arrangements are met in the early years.

School details

Unique reference number	141632
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10041575

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	419
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Richard Mann
Headteacher	Drew Brown
Telephone number	01536 310 680
Website	www.brambleside.northants.sch.uk/
Email address	head@brambleside.northants-ecl.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Brambleside Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are below the national averages.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and the proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are below the national averages.
- In 2017, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all year groups. In all, 31 lessons were observed, some jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Inspectors looked at pupils' work with leaders, observed the teaching of early reading skills, listened to pupils read and spoke with them to evaluate the quality of their learning. They scrutinised a variety of documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupils' attainment and progress and staff performance. Inspectors evaluated a range of plans for improvement. They looked also at the school's self-evaluation and documents relating to the work of the governing body.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior, middle and subject leaders and the coordinator for provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They also met with designated leaders for safeguarding and members of the governing body. Discussions explored a wide range of subjects, including safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day. They took account of the 90 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the 17 responses to the staff questionnaire and 105 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

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