

Brixington Primary Academy

Brixington Lane, Exmouth, Devon EX8 4JQ

Inspection dates

21–22 March 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	Requires improvement
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

- Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in mathematics. As a result, outcomes have been in the lowest 20% of schools nationally for the last two years.
- Across the school, disadvantaged pupils are not making sufficient progress.
- Governors do not monitor the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils with sufficient rigour.
- Leaders have an overgenerous evaluation of the school. The role of middle leaders is not sufficiently developed for them to have an impact on improving teaching
- Over time, the provision in the early years has hindered children's progress. As a result, too many children have not made the progress that they are capable of.
- The teaching of mathematics is too variable in quality
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Too often, teachers do not adjust their teaching to provide more demanding work in writing and mathematics. This is especially the case for those who are most able.
- The teaching of writing is not consistently strong. Weaknesses remain in pupils' spelling and punctuation. This limits pupils' ability to write with the technical accuracy expected for their age.
- Pupils' behaviour and focus wane during lessons when tasks lack challenge. As a result, low-level disruption hinders pupils' learning.
- Too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Levels of persistent absence are above average, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. This limits the progress these pupils make.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the Nursery class gain a valuable head start to their education.
- The school is improving after a period of significant change. Children in the early years and key stage 1 are now making better progress.
- In science, teachers use their subject expertise and knowledge of what pupils know to develop pupils' learning and understanding.
- Outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check for 2017 were above the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing further the skills of middle leaders to be able to check on and influence improvements in teaching
 - ensuring that the approach to teaching mathematics is consistent across the school
 - evaluating the impact of the use of pupil premium funding more rigorously by checking that planned actions are having an impact on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, particularly in mathematics and writing
 - ensuring that the school's self-evaluation gives an accurate view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good, by:
 - planning work that is sufficiently challenging for all pupils and especially for those pupils who are most able
 - adjusting teaching more swiftly when pupils are ready for more challenging work in writing and mathematics
 - ensuring that teaching addresses misconceptions in spelling and punctuation which cause pupils' writing to fall below standards expected for their age.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils, by:
 - ensuring that staff are skilled in managing pupils' behaviour in the classroom so as to minimise disruption to learning
 - continuing to work with parents so that attendance levels rise and fewer pupils are persistently absent.
- Improve outcomes for all groups, by:
 - accelerating pupils' progress so that it is at least in line with national figures in reading, writing and mathematics
 - diminishing differences in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally.
- Improve the provision in the early years, by:
 - further developing the indoor learning environment so that children are more engaged in their learning
 - improving teaching, so that all children experience high-quality teaching consistently.

An external review of the use of pupil premium 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

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders' actions have not secured teaching, learning and assessment that are consistently good. Teaching over time has not been good enough to ensure that pupils make good progress from their starting points, particularly in mathematics and writing.
- Leaders have an overgenerous view of the school's performance and have relied too heavily on external reports. Although there have been improvements since the appointment of the head of school in September 2017, many actions have been implemented too recently to make a sustained difference that can be seen in the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders acknowledge that plans and funding for disadvantaged pupils have not always had a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress across the school. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils, particularly in key stage 2, is variable because of the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Parents share mixed views about the school. They agree that their children are kept safe, but a proportion of parents believe that bullying and inappropriate behaviour occurs in the school. A proportion of pupils echo this view. However, they told inspectors that leaders deal with any incidents of bullying or inappropriate behaviour swiftly.
- The approach to teaching mathematics is inconsistent. Leaders' checks on the teaching of mathematics have not been sharp enough. Consequently, teaching of mathematics across the school is disjointed.
- The recent strengthening of the senior leadership team has led to several improvements and has made positive differences. These include leaders' actions to raise achievement in the early years and key stage 1.
- Systems to track pupils' achievement, such as meetings to discuss pupils' progress, enable the head of school to have a deep understanding of where shortfalls remain. However, it is too recent to see any discernible impact from these actions in bringing about the improvements required. Middle leaders are not aware of how to move assessment information forward to have an impact on improving teaching and learning.
- Most staff, including those new to the profession, praise the training and support that leaders provide. They speak highly of the leadership team, who give them additional time to develop their roles.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have access to a broad and rich curriculum. Pupils develop good skills and knowledge in subjects other than English and mathematics. Pupils' work in science is particularly impressive.
- The wider curriculum provides opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils learn about different faiths and value the range of experiences provided to enhance the curriculum. For example, pupils reported that their trip to 'Cadbury World' developed their understanding of the manufacturing process of chocolate and the different cultures in Birmingham.
- Pupils have a good understanding of British values. Their knowledge and appreciation

of the culturally diverse nature of British society is developing. Pupils take their many responsibilities as school leaders seriously. For example, 'digital leaders' reported that it is their duty to ensure that pupils understand how to keep pupils safe on the internet.

- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is led and managed well. Leaders ensure that additional funding is used effectively to meet the needs of individual pupils.
- The school makes good use of the physical education (PE) and sports premium additional funding. Money has been spent on providing a variety of sporting activities by qualified coaches and in developing the skills of teaching staff. Pupils have had recent success in local hockey and netball tournaments and report a notable difference in the quality of PE over the last two years. Furthermore, a greater percentage of pupils now take part in extra-curricular sports on a regular basis.

Governance of the school

- The trust board has taken positive steps to remedy the decline in standards and steer the school towards the right direction. Governors have made difficult decisions to restructure the school's staffing, including leadership. As a result, capacity to secure further improvement is strong.
- Governors have a strong understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. They keep up to date with the actions that leaders are taking, through their regular visits to the school. They receive regular information from the head of school in detailed reports.
- However, governors do not use a sufficiently strategic approach to analyse the impact of pupil premium funding. Actions taken by leaders are too often reviewed too late. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' achievement is variable. An external review is recommended in order to support further improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding, which places pupils at the heart of the school's work. During the inspection, several members of school staff were checked for their knowledge and understanding of signs and symptoms of pupils being at risk. Staff are clear about what to look out for, because of the induction and continued training they receive.
- Leaders have ensured that there are clear procedures for staff to follow if they have a concern about a pupil. Leaders, including the family support worker, act on concerns quickly and make further referrals when necessary. Furthermore, leaders are not afraid to escalate a concern if they feel that they have not received an adequate response.
- Leaders with designated responsibility for safeguarding work with a variety of external agencies to minimise vulnerable pupils' risk of serious harm.
- Governors go about their safeguarding duties diligently and have been well trained. The safeguarding governor meets with leaders frequently to review safeguarding practice. The trustees regularly commission an external audit and address any actions immediately.

- The large majority of parents and pupils feel that pupils are safe and happy. Pupils report that they feel safe and that they always have an adult to talk to if they have any concerns. They feel that the curriculum helps them understand how to stay safe. Pupils are particularly fond of the planned activities, such as monthly safety assemblies. They report that they develop their understanding of how to manage situations that might put them at risk.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not good enough and is inconsistent, including in the early years. Therefore, too many pupils do not make strong progress, particularly in mathematics and writing by the end of key stage 2.
- Teachers check and assess work regularly. However, they do not use this information routinely to plan activities which meet pupils' needs. Consequently, work can often be too easy and teachers do not adjust their teaching to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. This is why pupils' attainment is not improving quickly enough in writing and mathematics.
- The teaching of mathematics has not been effective. Some pupils have not grasped basic mathematical skills and so, in key stage 2, some pupils currently have gaps in their knowledge. Although improvements are starting to take shape, there are still inconsistencies in the approach to teaching mathematics.
- In writing, pupils have good opportunities to write for a range of audiences and for different purposes. Pupils develop a good handwriting style. However, pupils' spelling and punctuation skills in key stage 2 are weak, because pupils do not receive appropriate feedback. Therefore, pupils are not reaching the expected or higher standards for their age.
- Some teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour are not high enough. As a result, pupils do not learn as effectively as they should, including the most able pupils. In some classes, teachers are slow to re-engage pupils who lose concentration during lessons.
- Teaching has improved in key stage 1 over the past two years. The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics builds more securely on pupils' learning than previously, so that pupils moving through the school are making stronger progress than historically.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well to support pupils with additional needs, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities. As a result, pupils make positive progress from their various starting points.
- Work in pupils' books shows that, typically, there are high standards in handwriting and presentation.
- The teaching of phonics is regular and routine. Tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities and pupils make good progress to reach the expected standards. As a result of good development in phonics, pupils are able to access and enjoy reading. They typically read with fluency and confidence, using their knowledge of phonics to decode unfamiliar words.

- There have been several opportunities for teachers to meet with colleagues from across the 'First Federation Trust', in order to moderate the assessments made of pupils' work. This ensures that the judgements that teachers make about pupils' achievements are accurate.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The needs of pupils and families are identified early, and support provided by the school's pastoral support worker is well received by families.
- Pupils are proud of their school and report that the school has improved considerably over the last two years. They speak highly of the care, guidance and support they receive from all staff members.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including outside school. Pupils understand how to manage risk and where to go for help. They understand the risks associated with the internet and social media. The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, confirmed that the school keeps their child safe.
- Pupils understand bullying in its different forms, including cyber bullying. The 'repeated times on purpose' definition of bullying is a mantra well known to the pupils. A small number of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, using the free-text option, raised concerns over incidents of bullying.
- Pupils who have complex needs are well supported in school.

Behaviour

- In the main, pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. During the inspection, pupils were keen to talk to the inspectors about their work. However, in some classes, pupils drift off task and engage in low-level disruption. This is often because the task is not engaging or well matched to their needs.
- Leaders have not been successful in reducing persistent absence. Leaders do everything they can to try to improve attendance. They systematically use strategies such as first-day calling, home visits with the education welfare officer and, more recently, issuing penalty fines. However, the unauthorised absence of a few pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, continues to prevent attendance rates from rising further.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered. They know how to conduct themselves in and around school. They are friendly and helpful to visitors and are proud of their school. They report that they would not change anything about it.
- Pupils are familiar with the school's behaviour policy and believe that it is effective in addressing any inappropriate behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress in mathematics and attainment in writing at the end of key stage 2 has been in the bottom 20% of all schools for the last two years.
- Inspection evidence and assessment information provided by the school shows not all current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are consistently making good progress. This is particularly true for key stage 2 across writing and mathematics. In some year groups, large proportions of pupils are not catching up and meeting the standards expected for their age.
- Not all of the most able pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, reach their full potential. Some of the tasks they receive do not challenge them sufficiently well to master higher-level skills.
- The progress disadvantaged pupils make is inconsistent across the school. Leaders track how well these pupils are doing and have provided additional support, but the effect is variable.
- A higher proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, leaving key stage 1 in 2017 achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics compared to their 2016 counterparts. In 2017, a higher proportion of most-able pupils achieved at a greater depth in these subjects than in 2016. However, although standards are rising, this was still below the national average for reading and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been rising and is now above the national average. This is because there is a consistent approach to teaching early reading running through the early years and Year 1.
- Inspection evidence and assessment information provided by the school suggest that a higher proportion of current Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve the expected standards for their age in reading, writing and mathematics than was the case last year. However, this is still below what other pupils achieved nationally at the end of 2016.
- The achievement of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is good. Work is well planned to meet the needs of these pupils. Those with specific learning difficulties benefit from specialised support and this ensures that they make good progress.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The range and quality of activities that children access vary. Not all adults are clear about what children can achieve and the experiences for children differ across the settings. Over time, the quality of teaching has not enabled children to make good progress from their starting points.
- The indoor learning environment is not conducive to learning effectively. It enables children to avoid completing any activities at all. For example, inspectors followed several boys not engaging with any activities at all. Too often, they overextended their time completing activities that they have already completed, consequently wasting time which would have been key to developing their learning further. Inspection evidence indicates that such experiences have been typical over time.

- The early years leader is new to the role, having previously taught in Year 6. However, he has a growing understanding of his role and parents speak highly of the early years. In a relatively short space of time, he has developed a sound understanding of the early years. Furthermore, his strategic plans to continue to develop the provision align with the inspection findings.
- Children start school with a range of skills and understanding for their age. A large proportion of children join the school requiring support to develop early communication and language skills. However, through effective support and high-quality teaching in phonics the vast majority of children develop a good knowledge of the alphabet code.
- The proportion of children who reached a good level of development in 2017 was in line with the national average. This is a positive trend. In 2016, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was below the national average. Disadvantaged children in 2017 achieved above the national average. Again, this was an improved picture compared with 2016. As a result, these children were appropriately prepared to start Year 1 by the end of the Reception Year.
- Relationships across the early years are positive. Children like the adults who work with them and are eager to please. Routines are well established, but children do not always know what is expected from them and this is hindering their development.
- Children engage confidently with adults and play together well with each other. They are curious and enjoy accessing the equipment made available to them. One child was so eager to demonstrate a boat he built that he wanted the inspector to launch it for him in the water tank.
- All staff are appropriately mindful of the need to protect children and keep them safe. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Parents are highly appreciative of the quality of care that the children receive.
- Positive relationships with parents and carers are established prior to children starting school. There are many opportunities for parents to engage with their child's experiences. Parents are kept well informed of their child's progress and staff provide them with high-quality assessment information. Parents speak highly of staff.
- The quality of the education provided in the Nursery is a strength of the school. Teachers and adults work through well-planned activities with a calm, friendly manner which enhances their chance of success. For instance, as children acted out the role of a builder, adults probed carefully for explanations of their rationale for their tool selection. This method prompted rich discussion and children demonstrated an eagerness to learn and please their adults.

School details

Unique reference number	142044
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10045112

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	438
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Alexander Walmsley
Head of Teaching and Learning	Mr Stuart Dyer
Telephone number	01395 266997
Website	www.brixington.devon.sch.uk
Email address	stuart.dyer@firstfederation.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Brixington Primary Academy opened as an academy in September 2015. When its predecessor school, Brixington Primary School, was inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be inadequate. The school is part of the First Federation Trust.
- The trust board takes full responsibility for challenging and supporting leaders to ensure positive outcomes for pupils.
- The head of teaching and learning has day-to-day responsibility for the running of the school.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum standard expected for pupils at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The majority of pupils are of White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities or who are supported by an education, health and care plan, or statement of special educational needs, is above average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in lessons or part lessons. A number of these observations were undertaken with senior leaders.
- The inspectors scrutinised work in a range of pupils' books and listened to pupils read. They met with several groups of pupils to gain their views of the school. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, around school and in lessons.
- Meetings were held with the chief executive officer, executive head of teaching and learning, head of teaching and learning, as well as other middle leaders. The lead inspector met with five members of the trust board.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation. This included assessments and records of pupils' progress, and the school checks and records relating to safeguarding, child protection, school improvement plans and attendance. Inspectors also considered documents outlining the arrangements for the use of pupil premium funding and the primary PE and sports funding.
- Inspectors took account of 135 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 20 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Matt Middlemore, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Rachel Miller	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Ackers	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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