

Byron Primary School

Byron Road, Gillingham, Kent ME7 5XX

Inspection dates

18–19 September 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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too variable and is not securely good. Teaching does not consistently meet pupils' needs or deepen their learning. Consequently, pupils do not regularly make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders, including staff who hold additional responsibilities, do not use school performance information about pupils' progress well enough to know the impact of their actions.
- The assessment of, provision for, and monitoring of the progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are not well developed.
- Until recently, leaders have not given sufficient attention to developing all aspects of the school's curriculum.
- Middle leaders do not check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress well enough.
- Although leaders allocate appropriately additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, they do not check the difference that funding is making in order to ensure pupils' progress.
- Teachers do not reliably develop pupils' vocabulary across a range of lessons.
- The most able pupils are not routinely challenged.

The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving school. The headteacher leads the school with drive, energy and compassion and is ambitious for all pupils.
- The Westbrook Trust offers highly effective support to the school. The trust has worked with firm purpose to stabilise the school.
- Governors monitor the school and provide effective challenge and support for school leaders.
- Staff are a hard-working and dedicated team. They are keen to develop further.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and on the playground. They listen carefully to instructions and are polite and courteous.
- Pupils feel safe and enjoy their experiences at school. Staff give great attention to pupils' well-being.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Leaders use effective systems to ensure that children settle into school quickly and happily.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - developing the role of subject leaders, including those with responsibility for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, so that they have a greater influence on improving pupils' outcomes
 - ensuring that leaders sharpen their monitoring of the quality of teaching so that the consistency of teaching improves
 - ensuring that pupil premium plans are monitored closely to support leaders and governors in evaluating the impact of this funding
 - making greater use of pupils' performance information to identify priorities and check pupils' progress, including for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - providing a curriculum that successfully enables pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning for all groups of pupils, by ensuring that:
 - teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve, including for the most able pupils
 - teaching is planned well so that pupils are able to apply their knowledge and deepen their thinking
 - teachers' questioning skills are developed so that they align closely with the learning intended for the lesson or activity
 - teachers give greater attention to developing pupils' vocabulary to improve pupils' comprehension skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school. His determination and 'can do' approach are contributing effectively to improving the school. He has worked relentlessly to ensure that standards improve. Parents and carers single him out for praise, saying, 'The leadership of our headteacher is brilliant.'
- The Westbrook Trust has played a significant role in transforming the school since the school became an academy. They have implemented systems and procedures to ensure that pupils are kept safe, teaching improves and school funding is used effectively. They provide strong support to the headteacher and extensive professional development for governors and staff.
- The headteacher has set high expectations among staff. He rightly challenges underperformance and is resolute in ensuring that teaching improves. He has a clear focus on doing what is right for pupils and their families. Staff recognise the many improvements that have been made and relationships within the school are positive. Staff appreciate the professional development they receive and leaders' consideration of their well-being.
- Middle leaders are enthusiastic and show an increasing understanding of their roles. However, they do not yet evaluate the impact of their actions. Their work is currently underdeveloped as they do not consistently or rigorously check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- Up until recently, senior leaders were not always clear about pupils' starting points. Since September 2018, leaders are using assessment information more rigorously than previously. However, leaders do not quickly recognise inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and assessment across the school.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding effectively to promote pupils' well-being and provide support for disadvantaged pupils and vulnerable families. However, leaders and governors do not carefully evaluate the impact of this funding on pupils' progress.
- The sport premium funding is spent well. Leaders have considered carefully how this funding is used. They are determined that the limited physical space at the school does not restrict pupils' enjoyment of and participation in sporting activities. As a result, pupils have opportunities to take part in a variety of sports and competitions. For example, pupils enjoy playing football in the playground 'arena' and an increasing number of pupils are now able to swim. Pupils take part in sports clubs and their sporting achievements are celebrated and valued.
- Leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate training to support the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Parents and pupils confirm that they receive support through a range of suitable interventions as well as external support. However, leaders do not evaluate interventions well enough to check the impact on pupils' progress, so that adjustments can be made promptly. As a result, leaders are unclear about the progress this group of pupils are making.
- Pupils have access to a broad range of activities and subjects. Music is a strength of the school, with pupils taking part in an extensive range of musical activities. Leaders

actively seek out opportunities to enhance pupils' learning. For example, during the inspection, Year 6 pupils took part in a science activity at a local secondary school. Leaders are adept at acquiring extra funding to provide opportunities for all pupils, such as the annual Year 6 trip to Snowdonia.

- Although pupils are taught a range of subjects, leaders have recognised that the curriculum needs further development to ensure that it meets the needs of pupils at the school. Work in current pupils' books shows that teaching is not successfully developing pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in a range of subjects. Since September 2018, leaders have started to consider the school's curriculum more carefully, but it is too early to see the impact of this work.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. The values of respect and non-discrimination are deeply ingrained and pupils frequently consider wider world issues. The school celebrates diversity through the rich mix of the ethnic backgrounds of its pupils. Leaders seek out opportunities within the local community to enhance pupils' understanding of other faiths. As a result, pupils' understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, tolerance and respect is strong because these values are reinforced throughout all aspects of school life.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire value and support the school. They appreciate the good communication that they receive and the care that leaders and staff provide for their children. One parent explained that staff are 'very mindful of each child's needs', with many parents commenting on how the 'teachers treat the pupils fairly and are very nurturing'.

Governance of the school

- Governors recognise that the school 'is on a continuing journey' and are working well together as a team to effect improvement. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and areas which require further improvement. They provide strong support and challenge for the headteacher.
- Governors are highly motivated and participate in training to enhance their skills and ensure that their development matches the school's priorities, for example undertaking training to ensure that they have a good understanding of the school's performance data. However, governors do not currently have a good enough understanding of how well pupil premium funding is improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Nor do they know accurately how well pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are progressing.
- Governors use their regular visits to meet pupils and staff and see for themselves how staff are implementing changes.
- Governors who have recently joined the governing body receive appropriate induction and training to ensure that they understand their statutory duties. This enables them to work effectively with school leaders promptly.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that staff receive regular and appropriate safeguarding training. Staff understand their responsibilities well and are familiar with the latest government

guidance.

- Leaders ensure that the statutory checks for anyone working or volunteering in the school are carried out. Records are detailed and diligently maintained.
- Due to strong and nurturing relationships between staff and pupils, there is a clear culture of vigilance and care. Leaders act promptly on information received, working closely with the relevant external agencies and other professionals to ensure the safety of pupils in their care.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and almost all parents who responded to Parent View confirmed that their children feel happy and safe. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online and can confidently explain how to do this.
- Governors routinely check the administration of safeguarding processes, undertaking annual safeguarding audits to assure themselves that procedures are up to date.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and for the quality of pupils' work are not consistently high enough.
- Teachers are not always clear about what is the intended learning and focus more on setting tasks for pupils. As a result, pupils do not always understand what they should be learning. This slows their progress.
- Teachers' questioning lacks precision as it does not always focus effectively on the intended learning. In some lessons, teachers' questioning confuses pupils and leads to misunderstanding.
- Teachers do not reliably develop pupils' knowledge, skills or understanding in all subject areas. For example, pupils are not taught well how to apply the skills learned in mathematics to subjects such as science.
- Leaders have implemented a new assessment system and made recent improvements to strategies for checking how well each pupil is doing. However, when planning lessons, teachers do not consistently take account of pupils' previous learning. Tasks are not skilfully adapted to meet the different abilities and needs of pupils, including the most able.
- Teachers do not spot dependably when pupils are capable of moving on quickly. Pupils' books show that the most able pupils work well within their capabilities but are not always challenged. For example, in mathematics lessons, work set does not provide reliable challenge.
- Early reading is taught well. Recent changes to the teaching of phonics, supported by effective training for all staff, have contributed to pupils' evident strong progress in reading. Pupils successfully use their phonics knowledge to sound out letters and blend words when they read. Teachers match closely the home-reading books to pupils' reading ability. As a result, pupils are becoming confident readers.
- Leaders are keen to develop a love of reading for all pupils and have worked hard to develop the school's library with appropriate reading material to capture pupils' interests. However, in lessons, teachers do not always develop pupils' comprehension

skills effectively. Pupils' understanding is hampered by not understanding vocabulary in texts because teachers do not explicitly teach pupils the meaning of these words. This makes it difficult for pupils to complete the tasks set and slows their progress. Where vocabulary is explained, pupils are not given opportunities to apply their new knowledge.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Great care is shown for all pupils, including impressive support for those facing challenges. Staff in the school are determined to help pupils overcome any difficulties that they may face. Many parents expressed gratitude for the help and support that both they and their children receive. One parent, speaking for many, said staff often 'go above and beyond for every single one of the pupils in this school'.
- Arrangements to support pupils who join the school during the year are excellent. Many arrive speaking little English or are at the very early stages of reading. The reassurance and support offered by staff and the accepting culture of the school help new pupils settle quickly.
- Pupils report that bullying is rare in school but when minor arguments or disputes do happen, pupils say teachers quickly sort it out.
- Pupils show understanding and respect for each other's differences. One pupil commented, 'We treat each other like a family at this school.' When new pupils join, they settle quickly, with one pupil describing them as 'new members of the family'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are proud to be members of Byron Primary School. They are polite to each other and to visitors, opening doors and showing good manners at all times.
- Pupils' behaviour as they move around the school is commendable. Leaders ensure that transitions between classes and after breaktime and lunchtime are well managed. They do not allow the complexities of the school's site to impede the high expectations for behaviour.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Leaders monitor their attendance closely and are highly alert to any patterns of absence and the reasons for these. The attendance of all pupils, although not yet above the national average for primary schools, has improved from the same period last year. The attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils has improved over the last three years, supporting their progress.
- Leaders carefully track and identify any incidents of poor behaviour. Successful strategies, including the consistent use of the behaviour policy and carefully thought-through rewards and sanctions, have resulted in a significant improvement in pupils' behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- There are clear signs of improvement across the school. Attainment in key stage 2 is rising and pupils are now making better progress than previously, particularly in the older year groups. The school's own assessment information for 2018 shows that a much higher proportion of pupils were working at the expected and higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 than was the case in the previous year. Last year's Year 6 pupils were well prepared, both academically and socially, for their transfer to secondary school.
- Younger pupils make good progress with their early reading skills. The proportion of pupils who meet the standard requirement in the Year 1 phonics screening check is above that seen nationally and has improved from the previous year. This reflects the strong and consistent approach to the teaching of phonics.
- The school's assessment for 2018 in key stage 1 shows the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics has declined slightly from the previous year. In addition, few of the most able pupils at the end of key stage 1 made good progress.
- Leaders' strategic approach to ensure improved outcomes for pupils in Years 5 and 6 has been successful. Progress in other year groups is beginning to improve. However, due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, progress is not yet consistently good.
- Rates of progress for different groups of pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are uneven across the school. Case studies show some individual successes. However, work in current pupils' books indicates that gaps in the achievement between these groups of pupils and others are not yet closing quickly enough. Leaders do not have a clear enough understanding of the overall progress of these groups.
- Most teachers are clear about their high expectations for presentation and handwriting. Pupils try hard to meet these expectations. However, progress in pupils' writing remains variable. Many pupils' spelling and punctuation are weak and this limits the quality of their writing. Pupils typically repeat basic spelling errors and do not always apply punctuation correctly in sentences.
- In mathematics, teachers are beginning to develop pupils' reasoning skills effectively. Leaders recognise that further work is needed to boost teachers' confidence and subject knowledge in this area.
- The performance of pupils who speak English as an additional language is improving. Those who are behind or at the early stage of learning English are given helpful support, both in class and in small groups.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years is well led and managed. Staff work effectively as a team, drawing on

their individual strengths for the benefit of the children's learning, well-being and development.

- The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception has been higher than the national average for the past three years. This provides children with a secure foundation for learning when they enter key stage 1.
- Strong transition arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils settle into school quickly and establish expectations and routines. The early years leader has worked closely with a high number of pre-schools to identify children's individual needs early so that support can swiftly be put in place once they start school.
- Due to consistent and established routines, relationships between staff and children are positive. Clear direction from staff enables children to respond quickly to instructions, gain independence and engage in purposeful play. For example, children were observed independently selecting resources for their activities.
- A high number of different learning experiences are planned for children. Children are introduced to sounds and letters and supported well with their understanding of number. For example, through adults' skilled questioning, children were supported and challenged to write numbers up to and beyond ten on a chalk board.
- Children are safe in the early years. Leaders' hard work to engage parents has resulted in a high level of trust between staff and parents. Parents are full of praise for the impact of the staff on the levels of confidence and progress that they see in their children.
- Recent improvements to the outside area allow children to have access to a wide variety of activities, including water play, a sandy area for digging, dressing up and painting. Children enjoy the time they spend outside, exploring their different interests and learning to cooperate well together.

School details

Unique reference number	142399
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10053477

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	514
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Lillian Gould
Headteacher	Jon Carthy
Telephone number	01634 852981
Website	www.byron.medway.sch.uk
Email address	byronoffice@thewestbrooktrust.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school has a higher than average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average.
- Byron Primary School converted to become an academy school on 1 January 2016. When its predecessor school, Byron Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate. The school is sponsored by the Westbrook Trust.
- There are breakfast and after-school clubs that are managed by the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school. The majority of these observations were carried out with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or director of learning for the Westbrook Trust.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, and middle and subject leaders.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the Westbrook Trust.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their views about the school and heard some of them read. The views of 22 pupils who responded to Ofsted's online pupil survey were also considered.
- The views of 123 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 31 additional free-text comments were considered. Inspectors also spoke informally with parents at the start of both days of the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the views of 28 staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, minutes of governing body meetings and notes of the Westbrook Trust's monitoring visits.
- Safeguarding procedures were also reviewed.

Inspection team

Frances Nation, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrew Hogarth	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Donovan	Ofsted Inspector

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