

Birchwood Grove Community Primary School, Burgess Hill

Birchwood Grove Road, Burgess Hill, West Sussex RH15 0DP

Inspection dates

5–6 March 2019

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	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have been too slow to address weaknesses in teaching and learning.
- Many pupils, including the most able and disadvantaged, have not reached their potential by the end of key stage 2.
- Although leaders, including governors, track pupils' progress carefully, they do not have a clear understanding of the impact of their actions to drive improvement.
- Senior leaders have not successfully enabled middle leaders to improve teaching and learning in their subject areas.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations for what pupils can achieve or for the quality of pupils' work.
- Teachers do not make good use of the school's detailed information about pupils' progress and attainment to plan learning that successfully meets pupils' needs.
- The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn across a range of subjects. However, further improvements are needed to assess and deepen pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding across subjects other than English and mathematics.
- The teaching of phonics, although improving, is inconsistent and does not help pupils to make the best possible progress in reading.
- Pupils' have limited opportunities to develop and apply their writing skills across a range of subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils behave well and are polite. They enjoy their time together and are eager to learn.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years, because the support they receive meets their needs. This helps them settle into the school quickly and happily.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good. Staff show the utmost care for pupils, including for those who are disadvantaged and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Pupils are active and healthy. Many participate in a wide range of sporting opportunities.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics for all groups of pupils so that higher proportions reach the expected and higher standards by the end of key stage 2.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - using the school’s performance information incisively to monitor the impact of actions taken to secure improvement
 - enabling middle leaders to increase their effectiveness in driving improvements for all pupils in all subjects
 - developing the curriculum further, so that it deepens pupils’ learning in all subjects.
- Improve teaching so that it is consistently effective by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations, both of what pupils can achieve and of the quality of their work, including for the most able and disadvantaged pupils
 - teachers use assessment effectively to plan learning that challenges and supports pupils of all abilities
 - they provide frequent opportunities for pupils to write at length across different subjects
 - all staff who deliver phonics are trained to the highest standard.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher and governors have accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, they do not have an incisive overview of the impact of their actions to secure improvement. There are some green shoots of recovery across the school. These are particularly evident in mathematics, but, over time, leaders have been too slow in their work to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Middle leaders are enthusiastic and capable. They show a good understanding of their roles and what they must do to drive improvement at a faster pace. In the past, pupils' progress has not been monitored rigorously, and leaders have not been successful in rectifying weaknesses in teaching. This work is now underway but still lacks urgency and consistency.
- Up until recently, senior leaders were not secure about pupils' starting points. Leaders' work, including external moderation, has resulted in teachers accurately assessing pupils' learning. Leaders use this information more carefully than in the past. However, this information is not yet used successfully to improve pupils' learning.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding commendably to promote pupils' well-being and provide helpful support for disadvantaged pupils and vulnerable families. However, leaders and governors do not evaluate carefully the impact of this funding on pupils' progress.
- Pupils enjoy a broad and interesting range of activities and subjects. Art is a strength of the school, with high standards of artwork seen displayed around the school and in pupils' books. However, in some subjects, pupils do not successfully develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in depth. For example, work in pupils' books shows limited opportunities for pupils to develop their historical knowledge or geographical understanding.
- The sport premium funding is spent well. Leaders have considered carefully how this funding is used. The teaching of sport is led with enthusiasm. As a result, pupils participate in numerous sporting activities and understand how exercise can help them lead healthier lives. A high and increasing proportion of pupils from key stages 1 and 2 take part in a wide range of after-school clubs and sporting events. Pupils, staff and governors are rightly proud of pupils' many sporting achievements.
- Effective leadership is securing improvement in the provision for pupils with SEND. Leaders have carefully considered the needs of this group of pupils and have put in place tailored pastoral and academic support to ensure that pupils are successful in accessing learning. However, leaders do not yet have a secure understanding of the impact of this support.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. The school's values of respect, collaboration, independence, resilience and creativity are deeply engrained in school life, and pupils and staff model these well. Leaders provide pupils with interesting experiences that support their wider learning, such as

performing in productions, learning about different cultures and helping others by raising money for charity.

- The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire value and support the school. They appreciate the care that leaders and staff provide for their children and feel that leaders and staff are very approachable, saying, 'their door is always open'. One parent summed up the views of many commenting: 'The school is a warm, friendly place to be.'
- The local authority has rightly recognised that the school needs help to improve at a faster pace. It has recently put in place appropriate support and is now providing greater challenge to school leaders. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work.

Governance of the school

- Governors show a strong commitment to the school as well as a desire to improve their practice. They work closely with senior leaders and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Minutes of governing body meetings show that governors increasingly ask challenging questions to hold leaders to account. Leaders provide governors with information about pupils' progress and attainment. However, governors do not have a clear and incisive understanding of the impact of actions and initiatives introduced to raise standards. This hampers their work in securing improvements for all groups of pupils.
- Governors' attention to safeguarding is diligent. They ensure that systems and processes to keep pupils safe are fit for purpose. They regularly monitor the school's single central record to ensure that the correct checks have been made on staff before they join the school.
- All governors, including those who have recently joined the governing body, actively seek out and attend useful training to gain a deeper understanding of their statutory duties.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is a top priority for everyone. Staff are vigilant and fully understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. Leaders ensure that staff are kept up to date on safeguarding matters through regular training and weekly meetings.
- Staff are well trained to identify and report any concerns they may have about a pupil's welfare. These are acted upon swiftly, and leaders take robust action to help pupils and their families when concerns arise.
- Pupils have frequent opportunities to learn about staying safe online. The curriculum, themed days and assemblies provide pupils with opportunities to learn about the importance of e-safety. Recently, leaders have responded quickly to pupils' concerns about a controversial internet game, offering appropriate guidance and reassurance. Pupils say this has been helpful and appreciate the support offered by the school.

- All pupils spoken to say they feel safe in the school, and the overwhelming majority of parents confirm that their children feel happy and safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. Some teaching engages pupils well, so they work hard and make progress. However, at times where teaching is less well planned or lacks sufficient depth, pupils lose interest in their learning.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and for the quality of pupils' work are not consistently high. For example, teachers do not routinely encourage pupils to take pride in the presentation of their work or to pay attention to their handwriting. At times, pupils do not finish work set for them, and this often goes unchallenged by teachers. As a result, pupils do not consistently achieve what they are capable of.
- Leaders have worked effectively to implement an accurate assessment system. As a result, teachers are provided with reliable information about pupils' attainment and progress. However, this information is not routinely considered. Tasks set for pupils are not planned well enough to take into account their differing needs and abilities, including for disadvantaged pupils and for the most able.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers use well-devised questioning to deepen pupils' thinking. The use of high-quality texts in some year groups successfully engages pupils and develops their language and comprehension skills. Pupils in Year 6 spoke enthusiastically about a text they had been working on and how it had inspired them to read more.
- Teachers are not dependable in spotting when pupils are capable of moving on more quickly in their learning. Pupils' books show that the most able pupils work well within their capabilities but are not always challenged. For example, in science, teachers do not routinely extend or deepen pupils' scientific thinking.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving. Leaders' work to improve teachers' subject knowledge and raise expectations of what pupils can achieve in mathematics is showing some impact. However, due to lower expectations in the past, some gaps remain in pupils' mathematical understanding.
- Teachers show an increasing understanding of the new national curriculum and recognise that they were 'slow off the starting block' to respond to the raised expectations in English and mathematics. Leaders have ensured that teachers have been supported well to develop their subject knowledge in different areas, such as grammar and mathematics.
- Pupils are provided with limited opportunities to write at length or to apply their writing skills across a range of subjects. For example, pupils write infrequently in subjects such as history or religious education. As a result, current pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable in writing.
- Overall, early reading is taught effectively. Recent changes to the teaching of phonics mean pupils are successful in being able to use their phonics knowledge to sound out letters and blend words when they read. However, not all pupils receive the highest-quality phonics teaching, and where this is weaker their progress slows.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and friendly. They value the varied opportunities they are given and show a good understanding of the world around them.
- Pupils are kind and caring towards each other. They accept each other's differences readily and say that everyone is warmly welcomed into the school. They confidently explained to inspectors that, 'everybody is different, but everyone should be treated the same'. Pupils are clear that everyone is treated equally, citing the example of girls being given the opportunity to play in the boys' basketball team.
- Pupils relish opportunities to contribute responsibly to the life of the school. They learn about democracy through elections for representatives on the 'kite council' and as ambassadors in Year 6. Pupils are proud of their work to reduce food waste. Older pupils lead weekly assemblies on interesting topics such as aspirational role models and international issues.
- Pupils are encouraged to develop their interests, through the many subjects taught through the curriculum as well as the large number of wider activities and after-school clubs. For instance, on the playground pupils carefully consider their chess moves using the oversized chess board and, during the inspection, pupils could be heard singing melodiously at their choir club.
- Pupils are confident that staff look out for their welfare. They are secure in the knowledge that staff would help them out should they have any concerns, saying, 'If you are worried about something, they (the staff) help you sort it out.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school's behaviour policy is well understood by all. It is applied consistently across the school, and so pupils have a good understanding of the rules. As a result, pupils enjoy learning in a calm and orderly environment.
- Behaviour in lessons is, on the whole, positive. Pupils pay attention to their teachers and contribute readily in lessons. They are eager to learn and focus carefully on the activities set by teachers. However, where these activities are not well matched to their needs, pupils lose interest, and some off-task behaviour takes place.
- Pupils conduct themselves well during playtimes and when they move around the school. They show great care and respect for each other, helping each other when they fall over and hurt themselves. Some transitions, such as when pupils return to lessons from the playground and when they move between their learning groups, are less well managed.
- Pupils enjoy coming to the school. Leaders' recent actions to improve attendance are having a positive impact. Leaders provide individual and intensive support to families

whose attendance is low. Consequently, the school's overall attendance remains high, and is above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes require improvement, because too many pupils, including the small number of disadvantaged pupils, do not make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. In recent years, the proportion of pupils in Year 6 attaining age-related expectations in mathematics overall has been below the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving age-related expectations in reading and writing remains broadly average.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 in reading and mathematics is broadly in line with national averages. However, it lags behind that of other pupils nationally in writing. The proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in writing and mathematics remains below that seen nationally.
- Most-able pupils in key stage 2 do not make the progress they are capable of, particularly in writing and mathematics. In 2018, too few pupils achieved the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders recognise that provision for this group of pupils is a top priority.
- Pupils with SEND are making stronger progress, because increasingly their needs are identified with greater accuracy and appropriate provision is being made. However, the quality of teaching is too variable for this progress to be firmly embedded across all classes.
- The school's own assessment information and work seen in current pupils' books show that pupils are making the strongest progress in reading and mathematics. However, pupils' progress in writing is more variable, and leaders recognise that they need to provide more frequent writing opportunities for pupils to develop their skills.
- In 2018, at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2, the proportion of pupils achieving age-related expectations in science was broadly average. However, progress in subjects such as history and geography remains more variable, because assessment of pupils' learning in these subjects is not precise enough.
- The teaching of early reading is effective. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has risen sharply from previous years. In 2018, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard was above the national average. Most current pupils demonstrate good phonics skills, although some inconsistencies in the teaching of phonics remain.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years is well led and managed. The leader of early years has a clear and ambitious vision for children in her care and is not complacent. Staff work increasingly effectively as a team, drawing on their individual strengths for the benefit of the children's learning, well-being and development. Nonetheless, the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development at the end of their Reception Year remains slightly below the national average. The school's current performance

information and children's work show that children's progress is improving.

- Strong transition arrangements are in place to ensure that children settle into school happily, and staff swiftly establish expectations and routines. The early years leader is sensibly working closely with the on-site nursery provision to identify children's individual needs, so that appropriate support can be put in place once they start school.
- Children play imaginatively together and enjoy each other's company, forming strong bonds. For example, during the inspection children were using plastic poles as 'telescopes' and dressing up to drive the 'bus'.
- Interactions between children and adults, on the whole, extend and deepen children's thinking. During the inspection, children were encouraged to consider number when drawing maps. However, at times, adults' expectations of what children can achieve are not high enough. For example, children are not automatically supported to hold their pens or pencils correctly, and this slows progress in their writing.
- Parents are well informed about their children's learning. They appreciate the care and support their children receive. They value the information that teachers share with them, via an electronic application and useful workshops on how to help their children read and how to support them in mathematics. This effective working partnership supports children's progress successfully.
- Children's early reading and writing skills are developed adequately through phonics sessions, storytelling, and reading activities. Some children show impressive writing skills, for example applying their newly learned skills in writing at great length about a 'missing dinosaur'. However, adults do not consistently model phonics well, and, as a result, children can lose interest and their progress reduces.
- Current children's work shows that they are making strong progress from their starting points. They have access to a wide range of materials to express their ideas. Many children are now able to form letters successfully, with some confidently moving on to writing more-complex sentences.
- Adults give close attention to children's well-being. Safeguarding procedures are effective. Staff are well trained and undertake appropriate risk assessments to ensure that children are kept safe. Children's settled and happy start enables them to be well prepared for Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	125944
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10084284

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	397
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ed Perrett
Headteacher	Sylvia White
Telephone number	01444 242 209
Website	http://www.birchwoodgrove.org.uk
Email address	office@bwgschool.com
Date of previous inspection	11–12 July 2012

Information about this school

- Birchwood Grove Community School is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2016.
- The school has two classes in every year group from Reception to Year 4 and three mixed classes in Years 5 and 6.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is below the national figure.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is broadly average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes apart from one. The majority of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher or senior leaders. Inspectors also observed intervention groups, an assembly, breaktimes and lunchtime.
- The lead inspector met with four governors, including the chair of governors, and held a meeting with two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, the inclusion leader and subject leaders.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents by considering the 194 responses to Ofsted’s online survey Parent View. Inspectors also spoke informally with parents at the start of both days of the inspection.
- Inspectors met with a range of staff to consider their views.
- Views of pupils were considered through informal discussions with them throughout the inspection and in a more formal meeting with a group of pupils.
- One inspector heard some pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 read individually.
- Inspectors looked at work in a range of pupils’ books with school leaders.
- Inspectors examined the school’s records of current pupils’ progress, behaviour and attendance. Safeguarding procedures were also reviewed, including the arrangements for keeping pupils safe and recruiting staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including leaders’ evaluation of the school’s effectiveness and the minutes of the governing body’s meetings.

Inspection team

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