

Bere Alston Primary School

Station Road, Bere Alston, Yelverton, Devon PL20 7AU

Inspection dates

13–14 February 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge. Too few are working at the expectations for their age or the higher standard.
- Over time, staff have not had suitable training to help them fulfil their roles.
- Leaders do not deploy support staff effectively. It is not clear how they support pupils' progress.
- The approach to teaching phonics is too inconsistent. The planning of sessions does not consider pupils' emerging needs and reading books do not consistently match pupils' capabilities.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is poor. Teachers do not consider closely enough pupils' prior knowledge.
- Sequences of lessons do not promote pupils' progress well enough. Learning is often disjointed, which impedes pupils' progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils have made poor progress over time. Few are working at the expectations for their age.
- Leaders have an accurate evaluation of the school's performance and have set out plans for improvements. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this work.
- Teaching does not consistently inspire and engage pupils. Pupils often lose focus, and this leads to low-level disruption.
- Shortfalls in the early years provision have impeded children's learning.
- Progress across the school, including the early years, is poor. Pupils do not apply spelling strategies accurately and pupils do not develop their writing across a range of genres.
- Pupils' mathematical progress is weak. They do not develop their fluency, reasoning and problem-solving knowledge.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have demonstrated the capacity to improve the school's performance. Leaders have overhauled almost every aspect of the school to bring about much-needed change.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are now receiving the necessary support. Leaders have swiftly identified pupils whose needs have previously been unmet.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management to ensure that:
 - leaders and governors continue to challenge underperformance, providing staff with the training and guidance to help them fulfil their roles
 - leaders closely monitor pupils' progress and use this to drive improvements across the school
 - information about pupils' progress is accurate
 - the approach to the teaching of phonics is consistently good across the school
 - middle leaders embed the vision for the curriculum and closely monitor both pupils' progress across each subject and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good so that more pupils are working at expectations for their age or the higher standard
 - support to help pupils make strong academic progress is effective
 - leaders embed the approach to providing support for pupils with SEND, resulting in strong progress
 - the use of the pupil premium results in disadvantaged pupils making strong progress from their starting points
 - leaders provide a curriculum which closely considers pupils' starting points, providing activities that are suitably challenging.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment so that:
 - sequences of lessons build on pupils' knowledge across the curriculum
 - teachers use ongoing assessment information, adapting learning to meet pupils' emerging needs
 - teachers raise their expectations of pupils, insisting on improved presentation in books
 - pupils apply spelling strategies with greater accuracy
 - teaching enables pupils to develop their fluency, reasoning and problem-solving knowledge in mathematics
 - pupils develop their writing across a range of genres
 - pupils engage well in their learning and have increasingly positive attitudes towards school
 - leaders and teachers effectively deploy support staff to improve pupils' progress

- staff provide pupils with reading books that are matched to pupils’ reading abilities and allow opportunities to apply their phonics knowledge to read unfamiliar words.
- Improve the quality of the early years provision so that:
 - children develop effective habits of learning, including self-reliance
 - staff use information about what children can do at the beginning of the academic year to provide activities that promote strong progress
 - children regularly practise their writing so that a greater proportion are working at expectations for their age
 - staff provide children with books to read that are closely matched to children’s reading capabilities
 - staff have adequate training to ensure greater consistency in teaching across both Nursery and Reception classes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- In 2017, the school suffered a period of turbulence which included the annulment of pupils' results at the end of key stage 2. The turbulence included a change in school leadership. This all had a significant impact on the quality of education provided by the school.
- The quality of teaching is too variable. Leaders have acted to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, challenging underperformance where it occurs. This resulted in high staff turnover during the previous academic year. While leaders have improved the quality of teaching in places, inadequate practice is still prevalent. As a result, pupils' progress is not good enough.
- Pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding. When leaders took over in September 2017, they had serious concerns about teachers' ability to assess accurately what pupils know, understand and can do. Consequently, they introduced measures to reassess pupils' knowledge so that teachers could use the information to provide suitably challenging activities. However, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too weak to plug these gaps.
- Due to high staff turnover, leaders have only recently been able to add a much-needed tier of middle leadership to the school. Middle leaders have a clear idea about the aspects of their subjects that need to improve and have clear plans in place to bring about these improvements. This work is in its early stages and impact is not yet evident.
- The pupil premium has not been used effectively in promoting disadvantaged pupils' progress. While leaders have greatly improved the strategy for the use of the pupil premium, it has not yet resulted in improved progress. Too few disadvantaged pupils are working at expectations for their age or the higher standard.
- The approach to teaching phonics is too variable and a consistent school-wide approach is yet to be implemented. Over time, staff have adopted their own individual approach to teaching children how to read, with varying degrees of success. This is because, until recently, leaders have not made their expectations clear.
- Leaders have put in place a series of interventions to plug the gaps in pupils' knowledge. This signals an attempt to meet pupils' varying needs. However, these interventions are poor in quality and are not having the desired impact.
- Until recently, staff have not had access to high-quality training and professional development. While staff have the best interests of pupils at the heart of all they do, they have not been supported to help them fulfil their roles effectively. While training for staff has improved, staff still lack the knowledge required to help them support pupils effectively.
- Leaders at all levels have an accurate evaluation of the school's performance. They have engaged well with other schools to share expertise and good practice. They acknowledge that the school requires further significant improvement. They have improved pupils' school experiences in only a short time. However, the enormity of the

task means there is much more to do.

- The executive headteacher, ably supported by her leadership team, has demonstrated capacity to improve the school. They have acted on their accurate evaluations to improve the school from a very low base.
- The provision for pupils with SEND has radically improved. Until recently, staff identified too few pupils as needing specialist support. Leaders have now identified pupils' needs and have provided support for those pupils who need it, including external specialist support. However, it is too soon to see the impact on pupils' progress.

Governance of the school

- Until recently, governors had a poor understanding of the school's performance. They were too trusting of the information they were given and did not challenge leaders enough. However, since the period of turbulence in 2017, the structure and membership of the governing body have changed significantly. The new governing body has a heightened sense of urgency to improve the school.
- Governors now work closely with leaders to set and evaluate priorities for improvement. They receive frequent detailed analysis about the school's performance. They use this information well to ask probing questions and hold leaders to account. Governors now have an accurate evaluation of the school's performance and talk knowledgably about its strengths and weaknesses.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have acted diligently to ensure that safeguarding is effective. Leaders have acted to ensure that all staff know what is expected of them. Staff across the school are vigilant in recognising concerns about pupils' welfare and pass this information on to the relevant leader responsible for safeguarding.
- Leaders have put in place secure and robust recruitment procedures. Employees are subject to all the relevant checks to ensure they are appropriate to work with children. This information is recorded efficiently on the school's single central register.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teachers do not set work that builds on pupils' prior knowledge. While teachers have information about what pupils know, understand and can do, they do not use this information well enough. As a result, teaching is poorly matched to pupils' needs.
- The curriculum is poorly designed. When planning learning within a subject, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to make progress. Learning is not well sequenced, which means pupils cannot consolidate their understanding.
- Teachers often do not notice when pupils are finding that the work they set is too easy or too hard. The activities are mainly pitched at those pupils who are middle-attaining. This means that lower-attaining pupils often struggle and there is a lack of challenge

for higher-attaining pupils. This contributes to a lack of pupil engagement.

- The teaching of phonics is too variable in quality. Staff do not consider closely enough what pupils already know, teaching sounds that do not closely match pupils' capabilities. In addition, pupils do not have access to suitable reading books for them to practise what they have learned.
- The teaching of writing is typically weak, notwithstanding some stronger practice. Teaching does not pay enough attention to pupils' starting points. While teachers ask pupils to demonstrate what they already know at the beginning of each unit of work, they do not use this information to help pupils improve. In addition, teachers do not notice when pupils have misconceptions and so these are repeated over time.
- Teachers do not develop pupils' mathematics knowledge sufficiently. While they provide pupils with lots of opportunities to understand the value of numbers, this is not having the desired effect. Sometimes, it is not clear what teachers are asking pupils to do and this leads to confusion. Teachers do not assess pupils' understanding to consider where more challenge or support may be needed.
- The teaching of spelling is not effective. Teachers do not notice when pupils make basic errors in their writing. In key stage two, pupils misspell common words such as 'the' and 'saw'. This makes it difficult to read pupils' writing. These errors are repeated over time without improvement.
- Teachers do not deploy support staff well enough. As a result, support staff do not contribute enough to helping pupils make progress.
- There are pockets of stronger teaching in the school, where teachers have raised expectations of what pupils can do and presentation in books has improved. Where this is the case, pupils are making stronger progress from their starting points. However, the prevalence of inadequate teaching across the school means that, overall, pupils make poor progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils do not consistently present their work in books with pride. Often, work can be messy or poorly presented in one classroom while in another work is presented well. Teachers do not have consistent expectations across the school. Pupils' work in the foundation subjects is sometimes messier and demonstrates less pride than work seen in pupils' writing and mathematics books.
- Pupils do not consistently engage well in lessons. When learning is poorly matched to pupils' needs, they lose focus and become disengaged. Occasionally, this leads to low-level disruption in classes, which can distract other pupils.
- Pupils' understanding of e-safety is not consistent. While older pupils demonstrate a clear understanding about how to keep safe when using the internet, younger pupils are not so clear. For example, some younger pupils could not clearly articulate what to

do if a stranger tried to talk to them online.

- Pupils celebrate their peers' achievements well. They are proud of one another when they succeed. Pupils enjoy acknowledging each other's successes during the weekly celebration assembly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour sometimes distracts others from their learning. When this occurs, teachers are not consistently effective in improving behaviour. Occasionally, pupils' low-level poor behaviour results in disrupted learning.
- Leaders have worked hard to reduce incidents of poor behaviour outside the classroom. Pupils are confident that staff deal with poor behaviour, should it occur.
- Pupils' conduct across the school is a strength. Pupils move around the school calmly and show good manners. Pupils follow staff's instructions well and are respectful.
- Pupils attend well. Pupils' attendance is higher than the national average and few are persistently absent. Pupils' attendance has been strong for some time. Leaders have clear processes in place when pupils are absent from school and they work well with the educational welfare officer.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils, particularly those in Year 5 and Year 6, have significant gaps in their knowledge. Due to poor teaching in the past, too few are working at expectations for their age or the higher standard. As the gaps in their knowledge have continued to grow, pupils find it increasingly difficult to do activities aimed at pupils of their age.
- In 2018, the proportion of pupils working at expectations for their age and the higher standard by the end of key stage 2 was below the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make poor progress in writing. They make repeated errors in their writing, particularly spelling errors. Pupils do not develop the necessary knowledge to help them write across a range of genres. Consequently, from the beginning of a unit of work to the end, progress is weak.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is not good enough. They do not develop their fluency, reasoning and problem-solving. Often, teaching jumps from one part of the mathematics curriculum to another and pupils find it difficult to understand what it is that teachers expect of them.
- Pupils' phonics knowledge is poor. Pupils read books that are not well matched to their ability. As a result, they struggle to read the text and lack understanding of what they have read.
- Disadvantaged pupils have historically made poor progress. As a result, too few disadvantaged pupils are working at expectations for their age and the higher standard, particularly in writing. While leaders have put in place actions to promote

progress, it is too soon to see the full impact of this work.

- Pupils do not have access to the full breadth of the curriculum. While pupils have regular writing, reading and mathematics lessons, they do not develop sufficient knowledge in the foundation subjects. Lessons in these subjects take place too sporadically and do not meet their needs.
- Over time, pupils with SEND have made poor progress. Until recently, staff have not ensured that pupils have had the support they need because they have not identified their needs quickly enough. While support is now in place, this is still too variable in quality.
- In 2017, assessments at the end of key stage 2 were annulled. Although pupils completed these assessments, they left school with no published results.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Staff complete thorough assessments of what children can do at the beginning of the academic year. However, they do not use these well enough to plan activities to ensure children make strong progress.
- Children's progress in writing is not consistent. Most children begin the Reception Year with writing capabilities below those expected for their age. Few can write their own name, with most relying on mark-making or letter strings. Some children make strong progress, but others are still struggling to spell basic words. This is because teachers do not consistently ensure that children have enough opportunities to write.
- Children do not often opt to develop their writing or number knowledge without adult intervention. This limits children's opportunities to become effective learners.
- Children do not have good-quality books to read as they begin to apply their phonics knowledge because there are few such books available. Staff do now have plans in place to increase the book stock across the provision.
- The quality of teaching across the early years is too variable. The early years provision has recently grown to include a nursery class. While this is helping children to make a good start, leaders acknowledge that staff training is needed to ensure consistency in practice across the year groups.
- Children with SEND are well supported. Staff act swiftly to identify children's needs and work well with parents and external support.
- The early years leader is working to improve the resources across the early years provision. The outdoor area is due to be revitalised. Staff have been creative in ensuring that environmental factors do not restrict children's learning. However, the shortfalls in the provision have impeded children's opportunities to apply their reading skills and to continue their learning outside.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Staff ensure that children are well-supervised through appropriate staff and children ratios. In addition, staff have suitable training in place to ensure the early years statutory checks are met in full.

School details

Unique reference number	113246
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10048149

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	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vicky Glen
Headteacher	Melanie Cripps
Telephone number	01822840410
Website	http://www.berealston.devon.sch.uk
Email address	admin@berealston.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 June 2009

Information about this school

- Since April 2018, the school has been part of the Tamar Valley Federation. The school's governing body works across the two schools that form the Federation: Bere Alston Primary School and Lifton Primary School.
- Since September 2017, the school has been led by the executive headteacher of both Bere Alston Primary School and Lifton Primary School. She has shared her time between both schools. A head of school for Bere Alston has recently been appointed.
- The school was previously inspected in June 2009, when it was judged to be outstanding.
- In 2017, the results at the end of key stage 2 assessments were annulled.

Information about this inspection

- The school was selected for inspection under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005. While onsite, inspectors found it necessary for the inspection to be deemed a section 5 inspection under section 9 of the act.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from Devon local authority.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, middle leaders, including subject leaders, the leader responsible for the early years and the leader responsible for both the pupil premium and pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in each class. Inspectors also scrutinised a range of pupils' workbooks from Years 1 to 6. Inspectors also considered children's learning journeys in the early years.
- Inspectors met with pupils from key stages 1 and 2 to gather their views about the school. Inspectors also listened to pupils read to evaluate the suitability of reading books.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 26 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding documentation and the school's single central register. Inspectors interviewed staff across the school about their safeguarding responsibilities. Furthermore, inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding policies, their work with external support and the school's records of concerns.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including external reviews of school performance, recent local authority reviews and reports, the school's evaluations of its own performance and the current school development plan.

Inspection team

Nathan Kemp, lead inspector

Catherine Beeks

Her Majesty's Inspector

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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