

Inspection of a good school: Birchington Church of England Primary School

Park Lane, Birchington, Kent CT7 0AS

Inspection dates:

24–25 September 2019

Outcome

Birchington Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish in this school. Leaders and staff want the very best for their pupils. Pupils say that teachers give them lots of 'opportunities and chances'. Pupils enjoy their learning because teachers make it interesting for them. There is something for everyone.

Pupils behave extremely well. They listen carefully to their teachers in lessons and move around the school sensibly. They understand the school values of 'equality, being unique, responsibility, safe choices and respect', and adhere to these closely. Pupils say that incidents of bullying or poor behaviour don't happen often, but if they do, adults sort things out quickly. They play well together at lunch and playtime, enjoying active games and quiet spaces.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know the school site is kept secure and what to do should there be a fire or a major incident. Staff pay great attention to pupils' well-being. Pupils say that staff help them if they are worried about something. Pupils, some of whom have had difficult experiences of education in the past, settle happily into this school because of the excellent care and support they receive.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders, staff and governors have high ambitions for all pupils to achieve well. They work effectively to provide pupils with a broad and interesting curriculum. Staff, working together in curriculum 'hubs', give careful consideration to how lessons are sequenced. Overall, teachers deliver series of lessons that are well planned and build on pupils' prior learning. This skilful planning and teaching means that pupils are secure in their knowledge across a broad range of subjects.

Leaders make sure that reading is a top priority. The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) is well organised and, mostly, effective. However, teachers' confidence in teaching phonics varies. Some teachers, particularly in key stage 2, are not well equipped to support the small number of pupils who have fallen behind in the

phonics programme. Leaders are aware of this and already have plans in place to strengthen the teaching of phonics further. Pupils read books that are at the right level for their reading ability. They read regularly to adults at school and at home.

As pupils move up the school their love of reading continues. Teachers read to pupils often. Pupils enjoy story times and are inspired to read other books by the same authors.

The school's library is well stocked, and pupils visit this often. Older pupils greatly enjoy their library responsibilities. Pupils show an impressive understanding of the new vocabulary they learn from books. For example, one pupil considered how she could use the word 'aroma' instead of 'smell' in her writing and another pupil confidently explained the meaning of the word 'obliterate'.

The curriculum is not limited to academic subjects. Pupils enjoy wide-ranging activities that take place both during and after the school day. Pupils talked about the different clubs they enjoy, for example, cookery and debating club. Leaders organise exciting events such as going to the theatre and taking part in art exhibitions. Pupils' learning is brought alive by scientific workshops, visits from members of parliament and trips to France.

Leaders hold the same high ambitions for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They ensure that teachers and teaching assistants receive useful training so that these pupils get the support they need in lessons and more widely. Teachers adapt their planning well, with skilled teaching assistants making a big difference to this group of pupils' learning.

Children get off to a good start in the early years. Staff work well together as a team. They form strong relationships with the children and care for them well. Children settle quickly and happily into school routines. They listen to stories and enjoy playing together in their exciting outside area. Teachers provide children with many interesting activities. These engage the children and promote their learning.

Leaders, including governors, act with great integrity. They put the needs of the pupils and staff at the heart of every decision. Staff, including those new to the profession, feel very well supported by leaders and are proud to work at this school. All staff spoken to say that the headteacher 'empowers' them to develop professionally. Leaders carefully consider the well-being of staff. For example, the newly created 'Haven' offers a calm space for staff to relax and reflect at the end of a busy day.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are up to date with their safeguarding knowledge. Staff know their pupils well and are alert for any sign that may mean a pupil is worried. Leaders follow up any concerns promptly.

Leaders' work to support parents is admirable. It has a significant impact on improving the lives

of vulnerable pupils in the school. Leaders work closely with the local authority to ensure that pupils and their families get just the help they need.

Leaders and governors ensure that all pre-employment checks on staff and volunteers are carried out carefully. They are meticulous in this work.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers and teaching assistants, including those who work in key stage 2, do not have a good understanding of phonics. This means that they are not able to successfully support those pupils who may have fallen behind in their reading. Leaders need to ensure that these staff have the necessary training to further strengthen the teaching of phonics.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Birchington Church of England Primary School to be good on 13–14 January 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	118693
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10111261
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	477
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Loraine Bant
Headteacher	Kath Barham
Website	www.birchington-primary.com
Date of previous inspection	13–14 January 2016

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It is currently expanding to a three-form entry primary school. There are three classes in Reception, Year 1 and Year 3. There are two classes in each of the other year groups.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- The school operates a before and after-school club each day. It offers wraparound care for pupils who attend the school.

Information about this inspection

- I held meetings with the headteacher, other leaders and teachers.
- I began my evaluation of the quality of education by looking in detail at the teaching of reading, mathematics and science. I discussed curriculum design with leaders, carried out lesson visits, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers from lessons visited about the curriculum.
- The effectiveness of safeguarding was considered. I met with the designated

safeguarding lead, her deputies and reviewed the school's single central record. I scrutinised documentation, including a sample of case files, and spoke to pupils and staff.

- I met with three governors including the chair of the governing body.
- I met with pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally about the school. I took into account the views of 349 pupils who responded to Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- I held a telephone conversation with the school improvement advisor from the local authority.
- I took into account the views of 46 members of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey.
- I considered the views of 85 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and 85 additional free-text responses. I met with a parent on Day 1 of the inspection.

Inspection team

Frances Nation, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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