

Inspection of Lynsted and Norton Primary School

Lynsted Lane, Lynsted, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 0RL

Inspection dates: 19–20 May 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to be attending Lynsted and Norton Primary School, especially after the many disruptions due to the pandemic. However, some teachers' expectations of them are low. Pupils are not learning what they should. They experience learning activities that are not based on what they know or need to learn. Tasks are often confusing and do not help pupils to secure their knowledge. They have a limited curriculum that does not include learning in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education or about life in modern Britain.

Pupils like being part of a small school where everyone knows each other. They are a polite and courteous group who feel safe at school. They say that teachers deal well with rare instances of bullying. They happily go along with the activities that teachers have planned for them, and mostly join in well. However, they will sometimes chat or drift off to do or look at something else during lessons. Some older pupils get a little frustrated when they repeat work that they have done previously or already know how to do.

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

Since March 2021, leaders have widened the curriculum, especially for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Previously, these pupils had a restricted diet of mostly English and mathematics. However, the curriculum for all pupils is not fit for purpose. It is jumbled and does not set out what knowledge pupils will learn. Some teachers do not have the subject expertise to be able to take confusing plans and turn them into learning that develops and builds pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding successfully. Standards are low.

Lessons lack clear intent. Activities are often designed to 'engage' pupils rather than help them to learn, recall or use knowledge. Staff have low expectations of what pupils can do. Assessment has relied on commercial schemes that are not linked to what pupils have studied. As a result, staff do not have a clear understanding of what pupils already know or need to learn next.

Pupils are not prepared for life in modern Britain or their next stage of schooling. They do not receive PSHE or relationships and sex education lessons. Some teachers try to address important topics such as 'how to be a good friend', but this is ad hoc. Until recently, a weekly assembly led by a local church minister was seen as adequate to cover these essential aspects. Consequently, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is hindered.

The teaching of early reading is poor. Staff have a fragile understanding of how to teach phonics. They used to mix different phonics programmes together. This meant that pupils did not secure their knowledge of new sounds systematically. Leaders have recently retrained staff and modelled how to deliver phonics sessions. These are now happening daily. They have also purchased reading books that match the

sounds that pupils should be learning so that they can practise their early reading skills. However, there is still a long way to go.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) identifies accurately the learning needs of pupils with SEND. However, staff do not understand how to use this information to routinely adapt lessons to help these pupils to learn. Support staff are used to keep pupils with SEND from disrupting lessons rather than help them to learn.

Until recently, in Reception Year, the curriculum did not meet the needs of the children. Staff do not routinely interact with children in a way that supports their development. Leaders' changes are promising, and staff have responded well to the training and support provided by the new leadership team.

Leaders have launched well-considered actions that are already making a difference, especially in early years. They recognise that the necessarily rapid changes can increase staff workload. They provide support for staff with planning and delivering lessons.

The new members of the local monitoring council (LMC) are alert to the issues that need to be addressed urgently. They are improving communication between trustees, the LMC and leaders. They intend this to allow them to properly monitor the impact of all actions.

Trustees recognise the need to improve their oversight of provision. They have acted robustly since identifying the issues in February 2021. While late to start, these actions show promise.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that all adults are fully trained and alert to potential risks to children. Since March 2021, leaders have delivered fortnightly safeguarding workshops where all staff discuss different scenarios and actions. This has helped to create a culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff are confident about what to look for, and communicate appropriately whenever they have a concern.

Until recently, risk assessments of the early years area were not completed routinely. During the inspection, inspectors identified potential health and safety risks to children. These risks were addressed immediately by leaders.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Currently, the curriculum is jumbled and confusing. It does not set out what knowledge pupils need to learn and when. It does not support staff to plan

lessons that develop pupils' knowledge. Leaders need to urgently establish a logical, coherent and sequentially planned curriculum that staff understand and can work with. Leaders also need to train and support staff through these changes so that pupils learn effectively.

- Until recently, phonics teaching was muddled and did not follow the chosen programme. This hindered pupils' learning. Leaders should ensure that staff have the knowledge and understanding to follow the phonics scheme properly so that pupils learn to read well.
- Pupils' personal development is not routinely considered. Leaders must address this as a priority. Pupils need to consistently experience a rich, wide curriculum and learn about modern Britain so that they become thoughtful, confident, rounded individuals, ready for their next steps.
- Pupils with SEND no longer have a restricted curriculum, but learning activities are not routinely adapted to support and include them. Leaders must ensure that all staff understand pupils' needs and how best to support them. Teachers and teaching assistants need to adapt activities so that all pupils succeed.
- Work to improve provision in early years has started well. However, staff do not have secure enough knowledge of how to plan learning and interact with children to help them learn. Leaders need to monitor and accelerate the changes they have started. They must ensure that staff follow the plans set out and interact with children in a way that supports their development.
- In the past, those responsible for governance have not tightly held leaders to account. They have not checked the quality of work or its impact on children. As the trusts merge, leaders must ensure that monitoring and evaluation processes are set out and followed. Trustees and the LMC need to use these to monitor their work and ensure that it improves pupils' experiences and outcomes.

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 the school and 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	137467
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10184394
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	57
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Quentin Roper
Headteacher	David Whitehead (Interim Headteacher)
Website	www.lynsted-norton.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Turbulence in leadership has continued. Since the monitoring inspection on 30 October 2019, the interim headteacher (the ninth headteacher in nine years) and most members of the LMC have left.
- The Village Academy Trust (VAT) multi-academy trust (MAT) has worked in partnership with Potential in Everyone Academy Trust (PIEAT) MAT since July 2019. In March 2021, working together, both trusts put a group of advisers in the school because they were concerned about standards. These advisers make up the current leadership team and include the acting chief executive officer (CEO) of VAT as interim headteacher.
- A substantive headteacher has been appointed to start in September 2021. There is a new chair and members of the LMC.
- In June 2021, VAT is due to merge with PIEAT. This merger will create a new MAT, named Our Community Multi-Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the interim headteacher and advisers from the MATs that make up the current leadership team. They also met with the SENCo, all the teachers and most support staff. The lead inspector met with the chair of trustees via video call and the chair of the LMC in person.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in the school, inspectors spoke to a wide range of staff and pupils. They met with the designated safeguarding lead to examine knowledge, records and actions. They scrutinised records and documentation relating to staff recruitment, and employment checks. They sampled case files to explore how the school identifies and supports pupils at risk of harm.
- Inspectors discussed documentation, including leaders' evaluations and action plans.
- They spoke to pupils from all year groups about the school.
- The views of staff were considered from conversations and the six responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.
- The 16 responses to Ofsted's Parent View online survey were taken into account.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics and science. This involved discussion with leaders about these subjects, visits to lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work, and discussions with pupils and teachers from the lessons visited about the subjects.

Inspection team

Lucy English, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Frances Nation

Her Majesty's Inspector

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