

Inspection of a good school: Valley Invicta Primary School At East Borough

Vinters Road, Maidstone, Kent ME14 5DX

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 October 2021

Outcome

Valley Invicta Primary School At East Borough continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils talk with pride about attending this school. They see it as part of a 'family' of local schools that are distinctly individual, yet closely related. Older pupils look beyond the school gates with keen anticipation of their move to secondary school and are well prepared for this when it comes.

Staff have consistently high expectations of themselves and of pupils. Children in Reception have already settled well into the school's routines. Pupils know that they come to school to learn, but also to enjoy their time here. This includes pupils who attend the school's specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils behave well. They insist that there is no bullying here. However, one pupil reflected that, 'some children can be mean sometimes, but that's not to do with our school and teachers always sort problems out anyway'.

Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to take on extra responsibilities. They talk enthusiastically about their 'favourite' tennis, chess or computer games clubs. A new running club for older girls, 'Here come the girls', is aimed at building their self-esteem and to encourage them to develop a love of sport that it is hoped they will carry with them into secondary school.

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

Leadership of all aspects of the school is strong. Oversight from the multi-academy trust is effective, while allowing the headteacher autonomy to lead the school for the benefit of the community it serves. Collaborative work across the trust's nine schools, such as that between special educational needs coordinators or lead teachers from the trust's four specially resourced provisions, is increasingly strong. This has a positive impact on the quality of provision for pupils with SEND in all phases of the school.

Middle leaders are effective in their roles and contribute much to the quality of education the school provides. This includes curriculum leaders, some of whom are relatively new to their posts. A review of the wider curriculum beyond English and mathematics that was started two years ago is almost complete.

History lessons follow the school's curriculum overview closely and are much enjoyed by pupils. In classroom visits, Year 5 pupils were happy to share their 'expert' knowledge about how the local brewing industry has developed over time. Pupils in Year 4 listened respectfully to a heated debate between classmates about how Stonehenge may have been 'floated' into place. However, despite pupils' obvious love for the subject, teachers do not currently have a clear enough overview of what pupils have learned in the past in history lessons because the scheme of work does not yet show this with enough clarity. Leaders know this and plans are in place to address this once the first annual cycle of the school's revised history curriculum is complete in early 2022.

Pupils enjoy reading here. They love their visits to the school library. Younger pupils and children in Reception benefit from staff who deliver phonics lessons with a high degree of consistency. Pupils who struggle to read are taught in smaller groups by teachers who are skilled at delivering the school's phonics programme. Teachers model reading well. They benefit from a clear and well-sequenced scheme of work to help them deliver high-quality lessons that develop pupils' vocabulary and comprehension skills. As a result, pupils, including those with SEND, are not afraid to read to the class with increasing fluency, understanding and enjoyment.

Mathematics is taught in a consistent way across all phases of the school. Teachers use the school's mathematics scheme and associated resources confidently and add challenge when needed. Older pupils relish the complexities of solving mathematical problems. A group of girls from Year 6 were happy to acknowledge that their teacher was challenging them by insisting they solve problems mentally, rather than with the easier written methods they want to use. Staff in Reception are also skilled at creating opportunities for children to develop their knowledge of numbers, as well as their reasoning skills. Consequently, children enjoy activities such as counting 'bigger' or 'smaller' conkers or discussing the shape and size of pumpkins as they invent recipes for pumpkin soup.

Pupils enjoy their time at East Borough, both in and out of the classroom. Staff place great importance on ensuring that the quality of pastoral care is high. Parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's survey and free-text messaging service were overwhelmingly positive about this. Support staff, including office and site staff, are valued and very much part of the team here. Responses to Ofsted's staff survey were as positive as those to the parent survey.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff take their responsibility to keep pupils safe seriously. The culture to safeguard pupils is strong and led from the top, including from within the trust and by those in positions of governance. Staff understand what to do if they have concerns. Record-

keeping and policies are sound and follow current statutory guidelines. Liaison with outside agencies ensures that timely interventions are made, and that the appropriate support is put in place for children and families when required.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has reviewed and revised its curriculum over the last two years. While most of this work is now finished, the review cycle of the school's history scheme of work is not yet complete. Although a topic overview is in place and staff are using the national curriculum framework as a starting point, teachers are largely planning the component knowledge that pupils will learn in isolation. This means that teachers do not have a clear enough picture of what key knowledge pupils have learned in the past, or how what they are teaching pupils now builds on prior learning. The groundwork to address this problem has started. Leaders now need to ensure that their aspirations for a knowledge-rich and well-sequenced scheme of work for history becomes a reality as quickly as possible.

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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, East Borough Primary School, to be good in May 2015.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	144531
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10203159
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	470
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	David Joyner
Headteacher	Carole Bacon
Website	www.eastborough.viat.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Valley Invicta Primary School At East Borough converted to become an academy in November 2017. When its predecessor school, East Borough Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of the Valley Invicta Academies Trust, a multi-academy trust. Governance is provided by the trust and by a local school board with delegated powers.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. This has space for 12 pupils. There are currently 11 pupils attending. These pupils are mostly taught in the specially resourced provision each morning and attend mainstream classes in the afternoon.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and has taken that into account in his evaluation.

- The inspector held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher and other leaders in the school or from the multi-academy trust. He met with the chair of the local school board, accompanied by five other governors. He also met the chief executive officer, accompanied by two other directors from the multi-academy trust.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work, and talking to leaders, teachers and pupils about how teaching in these subjects builds on pupils' knowledge over time. The inspector also heard pupils read to an adult from the school.
- Throughout the inspection, the inspector assessed the school's culture to keep pupils safe. A wide range of documentation was considered, including policies and safeguarding records. The single central record of checks on the suitability of adults to work with children was also scrutinised.
- The inspector also gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- Pupils were talked to throughout the inspection to gain their views of the school. Staff and parent surveys were also considered.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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