

# Inspection of Northdown Primary School

Tenterden Way, Margate, Kent CT9 3RE

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Inspection dates: 23 and 24 November 2021

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|------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b> | <b>Good</b>          |
| The quality of education     | <b>Good</b>          |
| Behaviour and attitudes      | <b>Good</b>          |
| Personal development         | <b>Good</b>          |
| Leadership and management    | <b>Good</b>          |
| Early years provision        | <b>Good</b>          |
| Previous inspection grade    | Requires improvement |

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils describe Northdown Primary School as, 'fun', 'happy' and 'calm'. They feel safe and well cared for. Pupils appreciate and remember the school's values of harmony, curiosity, courage, determination, and aspiration.

Pupils behave well and are kind to each other. When bullying does happen, staff take action to stop it. Pupils understand the school's rules and are happy to follow them. They told us that pupils' behaviour has improved over the past year and that they can do their work without being distracted. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils who need extra help in following teachers' instructions are supported effectively by well-trained pastoral staff.

During social times, pupils use the play equipment in the playground or sit together and chat. Some play games like mini-golf or football. Pupils are quick to react when teachers tell them that playtime is over. Pupils line up sensibly and are ready to learn by the time they go back into their classrooms. They are keen to attend the after-school groups that have recently been started. Hockey, art and textiles are popular groups with pupils.

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

The school has improved significantly since the last inspection. The headteacher, leaders, governors and the trust have worked effectively to provide a high-quality education for all pupils. Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum from early years to Year 6. They have organised knowledge in a logical order so that teachers understand what to teach and when to teach it.

Leaders prioritise reading. As soon as children start in early years, they begin to learn phonics. Skilled staff use daily sessions to teach children to recognise letters and begin to read. Staff check pupils' phonics and reading knowledge accurately. Leaders use this information to ensure that pupils who fall behind are supported with the right help. Children are well prepared to start Year 1 because they achieve well in reading. Pupils further up the school read with increasing fluency and more now read for pleasure.

Overall, teachers explain learning well. Strengthened curriculum plans have enabled teachers to deliver well-thought through learning to pupils. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. This means that lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour and pupils concentrate on their learning.

In subjects such as mathematics and science, teachers use their subject expertise to plan learning that helps pupils to grasp new knowledge quickly. In some other subjects, such as history and religious education, teaching is not quite as effective.

In these subjects, teachers' explanation of learning sometimes lacks clarity. Consequently, pupils do not always develop a deep understanding of key knowledge.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). From early years, staff put measures in place to identify pupils who need extra support. Leaders develop carefully considered action plans for pupils with SEND. Leaders monitor these closely. This enables staff to closely match extra support to pupils' needs.

Pupils' attendance has risen overall since the previous inspection. Leaders have been steadfast in encouraging pupils to attend regularly. Staff keep in regular contact with families whose children have poor attendance. Leaders' have created incentives for pupils that attend regularly. However, despite these efforts, too many pupils are still persistently absent.

Pupils have plenty of opportunities to develop personally. Leaders are beginning to reintroduce cultural and educational events after they were curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Year 5 pupils conducted a 'litter pick' on a local beach. Pupils proudly told inspectors that the film they made about the 'litter pick' and pollution is exhibited in a local art gallery. Pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is well developed. For example, pupils are involved in democratic processes such as voting for the 'head pupils' or house captains.

Staff feel that leaders are thoughtful about staff workload and well-being. Staff told inspectors that they value the training that they have received on new approaches to the curriculum and teaching.

Governors check on what leaders tell them about improvements in the school. They ask pertinent questions about how well leaders' actions work. The trust provides well-received support to governors and leaders. Specialists from the trust have worked with school leaders in improving teaching, particularly in reading and mathematics.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive well-designed training in safeguarding. They have a secure understanding of the procedures that they need to follow if they have concerns about a child. Leaders take decisive action when they are concerned about the safety of a child. If leaders do not secure the help they need from external agencies quickly enough, they are relentless in ensuring that they get the right support.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers' subject knowledge in some curriculum areas is not as well developed as it could be. Consequently, their explanations of what pupils need to learn are sometimes not clear enough. Leaders should ensure that staff are trained equally well to deliver all subjects in the curriculum effectively so that pupils learn well in all subjects.
- Pupils' attendance has improved over the past two years overall. However, too many pupils are persistently absent. Leaders should continue their work to improve pupils' attendance so that fewer pupils are persistently absent.

## 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

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 138434   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Kent   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10200861   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Academy sponsor-led  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3 to 11  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 331  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | Board of trustees  |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                      | Gaenor Anne Bagley   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Matthew Harris   |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.northdown-tkat.org">www.northdown-tkat.org</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 25 April 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005           |

## Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in September 2020.
- The school has been part of The Kemnal Academies Trust since September 2012.
- The nursery provides education for children between the ages of 3 and 4.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, governors and the director of education of the trust.

- On the first day of the inspection, inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, history and RE. This meant that in each subject, the inspector met with subject leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also looked at curriculum plans from other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff from meetings with groups of staff and from the 42 staff who responded to Ofsted's confidential questionnaire.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, including the central record of recruitment checks on staff.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who responded to the confidential Ofsted parental questionnaire and those parents who provided free-text responses.

### **Inspection team**

Harry Ingham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kirstine Boon

Ofsted Inspector

Mrs Fisher-Pink

Ofsted Inspector

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