

Inspection of Byron Primary School

Byron Road, Gillingham, Kent ME7 5XX

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

A warm and friendly community exists at Byron. Pupils are happy. They are excited to welcome visitors. Pupils hold doors open with a smile and are keen to share what they do. Pupils know that staff look out for them. They feel safe and protected.

In lessons and on the playground, pupils get along. They abide by the school's 'Fair Charter' in following the rules. Leaders set consistent behaviour expectations, which pupils rise to. If bullying does happen, then adults respond right away. Pupils recognise everyone is equal. As one said, 'We all blend together and we do not treat people differently.'

Pupils are passionate about saving the planet. The student leadership team led a project on keeping the ocean clean. In school, pupils spread the word to try and be plastic free.

Leaders plan a range of enrichment opportunities. Pupils learn different musical instruments. They participate in local musical performances and sing at the local hospital. Pupils love the competitive sport opportunities. The residential trips are another highlight.

Academically, some pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education. They are not learning enough knowledge in some subjects. Some pupils are not learning to read quickly.

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

Following the last inspection, leaders set about creating actions to improve the quality of education. On the one hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down the positive direction of travel. On the other hand, leaders have not successfully translated their plans into reality. The school's improvement plan is packed with too many goals. Furthermore, trustees have not picked up through their checks and balances whether the impact is seen for pupils.

In constructing a new curriculum, leaders have wisely thought about all the knowledge that pupils need by the time they finish Year 6. These end points inform the knowledge route for all subjects. However, the way this knowledge is sequenced in some subjects is not working well. Pupils are not always learning content in the right order. On top of this, some content is repetitive. In early years, however, it is a different picture. The curriculum is planned well. Here, staff are clear about how knowledge builds in each area of learning.

Teachers are unsure how best to teach what is planned. In some subjects, they lack knowledge to enable pupils to complete the right work. Leaders have not made it clear enough to staff how the curriculum should be implemented. Nevertheless, teachers do routinely check what pupils are remembering. They pick up quickly

pupils' misconceptions and reteach accordingly. In early years, adults know exactly what children need to grasp in an activity. Children's play, for example, is carefully planned with high-quality adult interactions.

The school's approach to teaching reading is centred on an ambitious and well-sequenced phonics programme. However, leaders have not kept staff training up to date. They have not ensured that staff fully understand the research into teaching reading effectively. For example, some staff provide additional reading books that are not part of the phonics programme. These books do not match the sounds pupils know.

The knock-on effect of the pandemic has been that some pupils are further behind in learning to read. Extra reading sessions are squeezed in daily to plug these gaps. Leaders do use the programme's assessments well to identify the practice that pupils need. What has not helped is that children do not start phonics early enough in Reception. Higher up the school, pupils love the 'pop-up' libraries. Leaders hand-pick recommended reads to widen pupils' reading.

Leaders quickly identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has well-crafted processes in place to provide support. Pupils who require additional resources get what they need. However, teachers are not skilled enough in meeting pupils' learning needs. Therefore, these pupils' knowledge in some subjects is limited. Reactively, staff are juggling a raft of interventions to try and help pupils catch up.

Lessons are disruption free. Teachers establish slick routines which help all pupils to learn. The personal development curriculum prepares pupils well for modern Britain. They learn about respect and tolerance of different beliefs. Pupils are encouraged to speak up and use their voice for change.

Trustees and governors carry out their statutory duties diligently. However, they have not probed enough on the impact of the school's work. They have not got under the skin of how securely pupils are learning the curriculum and whether every child can read.

Staff feel valued. They appreciate how leaders support their professional development within the trust.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The headteacher and senior family liaison officer put their heart and soul into keeping children safe. Communication between leaders and staff is excellent. They 'press pause' to double-check everything. Record-keeping is systematic and rigorous. Leaders train staff in how to record concerns precisely.

Leaders are very alert to risks that pupils face in the community. They are tenacious with children's services. They will re-refer. The school learns from hosting trainee social workers to give them practical experience in education.

Pupils know how to keep safe online. The school has appropriate filters in place. The school's premises provide a safe learning environment.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders' curriculum thinking is not clear enough. As a result, pupils are not always learning well. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum builds component knowledge logically to enable pupils to achieve well.
- The curriculum is not adapted well enough for pupils with SEND. Consequently, these pupils are not learning content successfully. Leaders need to ensure that teachers are well trained to support pupils with SEND to gain the knowledge they need.
- Teachers do not have expert knowledge in all subjects they teach. Their choice of learning activities sometimes hampers pupils' learning. Leaders need to continue their focus on developing teachers' pedagogical knowledge to effectively implement the curriculum.
- Phonics teaching does not start soon enough. There are many younger pupils who are struggling to read fluently. Leaders need to prioritise how they ensure that all pupils learn to read at an age-appropriate level so that they can access the curriculum and are ready for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders and trustees have not rigorously checked aspects of the school's work. Trustees are not asking the right questions to check the impact for pupils. Leaders and trustees' processes for evaluation need sharpening so that they can assure themselves that pupils are receiving a high-quality education.

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	142399
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10227465
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	520
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Richard Gibbons
Headteacher	Jon Carthy
Website	www.byron.medway.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 September 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Westbrook Trust. Since the previous inspection, there has been a senior leadership restructure. There is now one deputy headteacher and one assistant headteacher.
- In November 2018, the school achieved the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Silver Award.
- 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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, staff and pupils. They also met with the trust's chief executive. The lead inspector met with two trustees and two governors. This included the chair of the local governing body.

- The inspection team carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, geography and religious education. To do this, they met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- Pupils across the school were observed reading to a familiar adult by the lead inspector.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads to examine records and actions. This included sampling a range of safeguarding documentation. A team inspector reviewed checks on the safer recruitment of adults.
- Inspectors talked to pupils from different year groups about their learning and experiences at school.
- The views of staff, pupils and parents were gathered through discussions and Ofsted's online surveys.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school. This included leaders' self-evaluation and school development priorities, policies, curriculum documents, published information about pupils' performance, pupil premium strategy and minutes of the board of trustees and local governing body.

Inspection team

James Broadbridge, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
James Freeston	Ofsted Inspector
Samantha French	Ofsted Inspector

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