

Inspection of a good school: Bishops Down Primary School

Rydal Drive, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9SU

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 July 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at this truly inclusive school. Pupils who are part of the school's resourced provision for pupils with physical disabilities and/or complex medical conditions are fully included in all aspects of school life. They appreciate the way in which senior leaders have made all areas of the school, including forest school, accessible to them.

Pupils at the school understand the school's values of achievement, self-belief, perseverance, independence, respect and equality very well. Pupils told the inspector that the values, and adults in school, help them in their daily lives to know what is right and what is wrong. From Nursery to Year 6, all children receive a very high level of pastoral support and care.

Behaviour in the school is generally good. However, there are a small number of pupils who can disrupt the learning of others. Pupils are very understanding of why this might happen, but senior leaders know that they need to continue their work to reduce instances of disrupted learning.

Parents and carers say that they particularly value the caring ethos of the school, and the positive integration of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Parents hold the school's staff in very high regard, and value the ways in which they support the emotional and physical needs of pupils.

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

Despite the school having had a well-structured phonics programme in place for a number of years, too many children in Reception and pupils in key stage 1 are not achieving well in reading. Leaders say that this is because of unavoidable staff absence, staffing changes

and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching for these year groups, which emerged following pandemic restrictions.

Leaders have taken steps to address this. For example, all staff were retrained in teaching phonics in November 2021. Leaders have also identified that there was a lack of urgency at the start of Reception. Teachers did not begin teaching letter–sound correspondence right from the start of the year, which delayed children’s reading journey. At key stage 2, teachers focus too heavily on preparing pupils to answer test questions. There is not a well-sequenced reading curriculum in place for older pupils.

There is a clear curriculum in place for mathematics, but senior leaders are aware that it was not being taught well at the start of the academic year, including in early years. This exacerbated the gaps in pupils’ knowledge and understanding that had developed during pandemic restrictions. This was identified by the local authority in December 2021. From this point onwards, and with the support of the local authority, leaders have worked hard to re-establish a consistency of approach in mathematics and to provide training to all teachers so that they understand how to teach mathematics effectively. The positive impact of this work is clear from pupils’ books, and what pupils now know and can do in mathematics.

In some foundation subjects, for example, physical education (PE), there is a clear and well-sequenced curriculum in place. Most staff are highly skilled in adapting the curriculum to ensure that the needs of pupils with SEND are met. In these subjects, all pupils, including those with SEND, make progress through the school’s intended curriculum and achieve positive outcomes. In other foundation subjects, leaders have identified that the curriculum that was in place prior to pandemic restrictions is no longer fit for purpose. Leaders have adopted a new curriculum for the foundation subjects, which will be introduced in September 2022.

Too many children are reaching the end of early years insufficiently prepared for the next phase of their education. This is in part due to staffing challenges, but also because it is not clear what leaders want children in early years to learn across the seven areas of learning. When leaders introduce the new curriculum in September 2022, their intention is that it will also inform the curriculum for early years.

The school has a broad offer for pupils’ wider development. Leaders are committed to ensuring that the whole offer is accessible to all pupils. This has not meant narrowing the offer in any way, but rather, finding those providers who can cater for the needs of each member of the school community. For example, this year, on the residential trip, both non-disabled and disabled pupils had the chance to ‘fly’ on the zip wire. Pupils enjoy forest school and eco-club, where they learn about the environment and how to care for local wildlife.

Leaders have ensured that pupils receive effective personal, social and health education, which incorporates relationships and sex education. Right from early years, children learn that their body belongs to them, that ‘no means no’ and that talking about secrets that are upsetting them is the right thing to do. Older pupils learn about consent as part of their relationships and sex education programme.

Leaders, staff and governors are all committed to the pupils of Bishops Down Primary School and want the very best for them. However, morale among some staff is currently low. Staff have not always felt supported by leaders in their role, particularly this academic year. There has been a lack of clarity from leaders about how staff should respond to and manage the behaviour of pupils with particular needs and/or SEND. The capacity of the senior leadership team was reduced during and immediately after pandemic restrictions. The local authority is currently providing the school with a high level of support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school provides families with a high level of effective early help and support. All staff have been trained to identify when a child might need early help or might be at risk of abuse. However, the number of concerns being identified by staff is relatively low, and senior leaders have not effectively checked why this is or assured themselves that safeguarding practice in the school does fully align with policy. For those pupils who already have an assigned social worker, leaders work effectively with social workers and other external safeguarding partners, keeping detailed records of actions and outcomes.

Safer recruitment is well managed in the school, and any allegations about adults are appropriately referred and managed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Senior leaders responsible for safeguarding do not always maintain sufficiently clear oversight of the school's safeguarding systems. They do not analyse the information they hold effectively. This means that they do not always know whether the response from adults working with children is as robust as it needs to be. Senior leaders responsible for safeguarding need to ensure that they maintain sharp oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements to ensure that all concerns are being identified and subsequent action is robust, and precisely recorded.
- The school's curriculum for reading at key stage 2 is overly focused on preparing pupils for reading tests. It is not preparing pupils to read more complex texts over time, and nor is it supporting pupils' engagement with texts, or developing their love of reading. Leaders need to redevelop the reading curriculum to ensure a rigorous and sequential approach during key stage 2. This is so that all pupils learn to read independently in different subjects, reading and understanding a wide range of increasingly complex fiction and non-fiction texts.
- The curriculum for children in early years is not effective enough. Leaders are not clear about what they want children to know and be able to do across the seven areas of learning. Too many children are reaching the end of Reception ill prepared for key stage 1. This has been compounded by turbulence in staffing in early years. Leaders need to replan the curriculum for early years to ensure that it is taught with logical

progression, systematically and in a way that is explained effectively, so that all children gain the necessary foundations for the rest of their schooling. As the curriculum is redeveloped and implemented, senior leaders must continuously assure themselves that the aims of the early years foundation stage are met.

- A small number of pupils have particular needs in relation to their behaviour. Some of these pupils have a specific SEND. Senior leaders make adaptations to the school's behaviour policy on a case-by-case basis for these pupils. They have not, however, made clear to staff who work with these pupils daily what they should do to manage the behaviour of these pupils and ensure that learning is not disrupted. For some staff, this has felt very disempowering. Senior leaders need to ensure that for any pupil who will be subject to an adaptive behaviour management approach, the approach is understood, and can be applied, by all staff. Senior leaders also need to ensure that both staff and pupils understand what is in place to secure demonstrable improvement in the behaviour of these pupils.

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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2012.

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	118468
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10211454
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Gilly Shankland
Headteacher	Clare Owen
Website	www.bishopsdownprimary.org
Date of previous inspection	21 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Throughout the pandemic, there has been a lack of capacity at senior leadership level. A new senior leader has been appointed, and another has returned from maternity leave, which has provided additional, and much-needed, capacity.
- The school operates a resourced provision for pupils with physical disabilities and complex medical needs.
- The school does not use any off-site alternative providers.

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 leaders, and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other members of the leadership team. The inspector met the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and two additional representatives of the governing body. The inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and PE. In these deep dives, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. For the reading deep dive, the inspector listened to pupils reading aloud.
- The inspector also spoke to leaders about curriculum development in other subjects, including personal, social and health education and relationships and sex education.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector checked the single central record, reviewed safeguarding records and spoke to leaders, staff and pupils. The inspector considered how well the school manages safer recruitment, and how it manages allegations about adults. The inspector also discussed safeguarding with those responsible for governance and with the local authority.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school development plans, minutes of recent meetings of the governing body and recent notes of local authority visits.
- The inspector talked to pupils about their learning, what behaviour is like at the school and whether they felt safe at school.
- The inspector reviewed 34 responses to the pupil survey, 31 responses to the staff survey and 103 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The inspector spoke to parents at the gate on the morning of day 2 of the inspection.

Inspection team

Alice Roberts, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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