

Inspection of Bryony School

157 Marshall Road, Rainham, Marshall Road, Rainham ME8 0AJ

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Early years provision	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Children in early years get off to a flying start. The early years provision is well resourced and children love learning, guided expertly by their teaching staff. As pupils move through the school they tackle their learning activities with relish. Pupils are happy to belong to this school.

Pupils usually behave well and there is a harmonious atmosphere. They are kind to each other and there is little bullying. Pupils are confident that teachers can sort out any concerns they may have.

Leaders and teaching staff have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. The ambitious curriculum inspires pupils and they do well. Leaders provide a wide range of clubs and activities for pupils. School leaders put equal emphasis on all areas of pupils' development.

Parents are highly supportive of the school and what it provides for their children. One parent summed up the comments of most by saying, 'This school is one big family, my children are so happy there and thriving. They have come such a long way academically.'

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

Leaders have developed a wide-ranging and ambitious curriculum. Leaders make sure that it is designed to build on what pupils already know. This means that pupils acquire secure knowledge long term across a wide range of subjects. The plentiful trips, visits and clubs add to pupils' rich experiences. The curriculum serves pupils well and they are motivated to learn.

Staff know pupils very well and if any pupil has special educational needs and/or disabilities, the curriculum is adapted well for them. Teachers keep a close eye on all pupils' learning, keeping careful records about what pupils know and can do. Teachers expertly tackle any misconceptions that may have arisen for pupils. Teachers communicate well with parents to let them know how their children are getting on. This is especially strong in the early years.

Staff are knowledgeable about how pupils learn to read. They implement the phonics scheme consistently well. Pupils in the early years learn phonics well. They read books that are carefully matched to their ability. Staff listen frequently to pupils read and take swift action should pupils need extra help. This is effective and helps pupils to develop confidence and fluency. Pupils of all ages enjoy reading a wide variety of texts, including 'A Christmas Carol' and 'Goodnight Mr Tom'. Staff ensure that pupils carry out in-depth analysis so they understand the text well.

Leadership of curriculum subjects is not as strong as it could be. Subject leaders do not check the quality of the effectiveness of the curriculum consistently well. Sometimes, pupils' learning depends too much on which teacher they have. Leaders

have already recognised this and are taking the right actions to develop subject leaders' roles.

Teachers' expectations for behaviour in the classroom are clear and children meet them. There are respectful working relationships between pupils and staff. In the junior part of the school, a small minority of pupils do not behave as well as usual when between lessons.

Leaders have developed an ethos that promotes pupils' personal development. Staff, pupils, parents and carers say that the school has caring and empathetic values. Pupils understand that people have differences and, as one pupil said, 'Everyone is welcome here and can be who they want to be.' Pupils learn about British values of democracy and tolerance. Leaders have developed and communicated a well-thought-out relationship and sex education policy. As a result, pupils receive age-appropriate guidance for their personal development.

The vast majority of staff feel very well supported. They report that leaders take account of their workload. Leaders work hard to ensure that staff on both school sites work together to share expertise.

The proprietor has developed an advisory board which provides helpful support and challenge to school leaders, especially about the quality of education. The proprietor also makes sure that equality policies are in place and that they meet the necessary requirements. There is less scrutiny on ensuring there is a systematic approach to checking the independent school standards. Consequently, minor adjustments needed to be made at the beginning of the inspection. The independent school standards nevertheless are met. The proprietor has already identified the need to strengthen this part of governance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils learn about how to keep safe in the curriculum. Staff know pupils well and make their safety a priority. Staff are well trained in safeguarding. They report concerns about pupils to the safeguarding leader in a timely manner. Leaders act on these concerns, liaising well with outside agencies if necessary.

Safeguarding checks when recruiting staff are carried out rigorously, although records of these are not double checked closely enough to spot any administration errors. One such error was found on inspection and easily rectified.

Leaders ensure that the safeguarding policy takes full account of current government requirements and is published on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Subject leaders' checks on how well the curriculum is being implemented are not consistently as strong as they could be. At times, there is the potential for variation in pupils' learning according to the teacher that they have. Senior leaders recognise this and should continue to develop subject leaders' roles to ensure that consistency is assured at all times.
- Although the advisory board checks the quality of education that pupils receive, it does have a fully rigorous oversight of the independent school standards. Consequently, there is scope for slippage on some of the standards. The proprietor should make sure that the advisory board has a tight oversight of the standards.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	118979
DfE registration number	887/6001
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10243452
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	128
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	David Edmunds
Chair	Chris Ferguson
Headteacher	Natalie Gee
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6690 – £7412
Telephone number	01634 231511
Website	www.bryonyschool.org.uk
Email address	office@bryonyschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 to 21 June 2018

Information about this school

- Bryony School is a non-selective independent day school in Rainham, Kent. The school caters for boys and girls between the ages of two and 11. There are currently no children aged two on roll.
- The school operates on two sites that are about two miles apart. The building at Marshall Road is a converted house in a residential area. It provides education for pupils aged between two and seven years. This includes a pre-school class, a Nursery class and a Reception class that provide for children in the early years foundation stage.
- The second site, at Meresborough Road, ME8 8PP, is for pupils aged between seven and 11 years old. The building is a former farmhouse with additional outbuildings situated in a rural area.
- The school provides additional childcare before and after school. It also provides transport by minibuss between the school sites.
- There are no pupils with an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. 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 chair of the advisory board, the headteacher, other leaders, staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the proprietor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and art. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, carried out lesson visits, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors viewed the website and looked at a number of policies and documents. They also considered views of staff by looking at their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

- The lead inspector spoke with a parent and considered parents' and carers' responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector checked the single central record of recruitment checks and other safeguarding records. Inspectors also met with the designated safeguarding leader and spoke to staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Sue Child, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mark Cole

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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