

Inspection of Birkbeck Primary School

Alma Road, Sidcup, Kent DA14 4ED

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 December 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are motivated and keen to do well. They know how to study effectively. They work well in groups and concentrate independently. Staff make sure that pupils are kept safe here.

Pupils behave consistently well. They are thoughtful and treat each other with respect. Staff encourage pupils to take on responsibility and to build resilience. Pupils are confident that adults will deal with any concerns swiftly.

The school has a robust approach to ensuring that the needs of all pupils are met. This helps pupils to achieve highly. In early years, children get off to an excellent start. Staff ensure that children are fully ready for Year 1.

Typically, parents and carers appreciate the recent improvements that leaders have made, such as increasing communication and the curriculum enrichment offer. Pupils have a range of wider opportunities. For example, they look forward to residential visits and outings to museums and places of interest. The school offers a range of clubs, including gardening, choir, and the opportunity to create comic books.

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

Leaders have thought carefully about the ambition of the curriculum. Leaders have identified key concepts, known as 'threads', to sequence the knowledge pupils learn over time. For instance, in science, pupils in Year 4 learn to evaluate how scientific tests are fair, and by Year 6 they understand how to control variables when carrying out experiments. Children in Reception receive exceptional support to develop across all areas of learning. For example, staff enabled children to explore the natural world by growing plants from a seed.

The school has a coordinated approach to staff's coaching and professional development. Leaders help staff to improve their teaching and build confidence, particularly for those in the early stages of their careers. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They present information to pupils clearly. This includes using resources skilfully. For example, staff used practical resources and visual representations to help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to access curriculum content. In mathematics, staff develop pupils' strong reasoning skills when explaining calculations. This leads to pupils' high outcomes in mathematics. In some subjects, the aims of the curriculum are not implemented as securely. This limits pupils' development of important subject-specific knowledge and understanding deeply.

Teachers model key content effectively. They regularly revisit and recap content that pupils have been taught. Teachers use assessment effectively to identify any gaps in what pupils should know. Staff swiftly target pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning. Adults support pupils in learning key knowledge and vocabulary well. Staff

have regular training to identify and meet pupils' needs. This helps them to adapt learning effectively for pupils with SEND.

The school places a strong focus on pupils experiencing high-quality texts. This includes books relating to other subjects, such as problem-solving in mathematics. In Reception, staff enable children to segment and blend phonic sounds with confidence. They make sure that children use their phonics knowledge to practise their early writing skills well. Children use rhymes to help them develop accuracy when saying sounds and writing words. Across the school, pupils learn to read fluently. They share their favourite books and characters enthusiastically.

The school has clearly defined expectations for pupils' behaviour. Staff reinforce pupils' positive conduct through recognition, including rewards. During lessons, learning goes uninterrupted because pupils concentrate intently. Children in the early years maintain sustained focus and interest in the purposeful experiences that adults provide for them. Leaders take a proactive approach to following up with pupil absence. They work closely with parents to identify and address any attendance concerns.

Leaders think carefully about the variety of educational visits on offer. For example, pupils go on outings to places of historical significance. The school makes sure that pupils' positive mental health is promoted. This includes exploring different themes associated with mental health, such as managing feelings and stress, through books. Staff teach pupils about the importance of consent in an age-appropriate way.

Those responsible for governance have been diligent in maintaining close oversight of the school during recent changes in leadership. They are persistent and proactive in ensuring that decisions are made in the best interest of pupils. The school makes sure that staff workload is manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, the curriculum is not consistently delivered. This limits some pupils' subject-specific knowledge and understanding in these subjects. The school must ensure that the curriculum is consistently delivered in all subjects so that pupils develop a deep body of knowledge and skills.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	101426
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	10287188
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	586
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jenny Watson
Headteacher	Gillian Ball (interim headteacher)
Website	www.birkbeck.bexley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school is expanding from two forms of entry to three forms in each year group. There are currently two classes in Years 5 and 6. All the other year groups have three classes.
- Since the last inspection, there have been three headteachers appointed to the school. The current headteacher is an interim position. A substantive headteacher was recently appointed and is due to start in the summer term.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the chair and members of the governing body, a local authority representative, the headteacher, senior leaders, and a range of staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and considered pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, pupils and staff, including through Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Lascelles Haughton, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Robin Boshier	Ofsted Inspector
Sacha Husnu-Beresford	His Majesty's Inspector
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