

Inspection of Byron Court Primary School

Spencer Road, Wembley, Middlesex HA0 3SF

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 11 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Since the previous inspection, significant changes in leadership have left the school with insufficient capacity to run effectively. Leadership is overwhelmed. Too much responsibility is held by too few people. This has led to a marked deterioration in all aspects of the school's work. Areas that need urgent improvement, including the school's work to promote good behaviour, have been left unaddressed for too long. As a result, pupils are not receiving an acceptable standard of education.

While the curriculum offered is broad and planned with ambition, the school has not made sure that it is implemented well. This is especially the case for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils' learning is given too little attention. The structures in place to identify pupils with SEND and to support their learning are weak. Often, their needs are not identified and met. This leads to pupils with SEND not making progress through the curriculum.

The school has not done enough to ensure that pupils behave well. Behaviour policies are poorly understood and inconsistently applied. This means that pupils' behaviour and attitudes have significantly declined over time. In some lessons, pupils disrupt their own learning and that of others. Breaktimes are chaotic, even when they are being managed by many members of staff. The school's response to serious behaviour incidents is often inconsistent and ineffective. Some pupils, and some parents and carers, have concerns about bullying or behaviour. They feel that when these occur, things are not dealt with well and, consequently, continue.

The school offers many enrichment activities, such as karate and cooking. These are planned successfully to help to broaden pupils' wider experiences. However, the planning and delivery of personal, social and health education (PSHE) are not as successful at helping pupils to develop into respectful and well-rounded citizens. The use of racist language has been normalised, and too few steps are being taken to address this.

Interim leadership has prioritised ensuring that pupils are kept safe. This work has been effective. Suitable arrangements are in place to identify and help those pupils who may be vulnerable to harm.

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

The school lacks the necessary leadership capacity to improve. Turbulence in leadership has not been managed well. This has led to a sharp decline in standards in all aspects of school life. The interim leadership team is trying to make things better for pupils and reverse this deterioration. However, it has become overloaded by the scale and amount of work needed, leaving it with too little time and capacity to focus on bringing about the necessary improvements.

The governing body recognises the need to secure further leadership capacity and stabilise the school. For example, it has recently tried to boost leadership capacity by

securing the help of external consultants. It is also in the process of seconding experienced leadership from another school. Despite this, too much is expected of the current arrangements for interim leadership. Significant issues in school remain either unidentified or unaddressed. They are not being tackled with sufficient urgency and rigour. As a result, pupils, particularly those with SEND, are not receiving a good-enough education. Some parents have lost confidence in the school, and in the provision and expectations for their children.

The school has a written behaviour policy. However, the lack of leadership capacity has meant that this policy is often not understood or followed. This leaves pupils unsure of what is expected of them. Incidents of poor behaviour are not addressed consistently. Actions taken in response to similar behaviour issues vary widely. Responses to bullying incidents are also inconsistent and, as a result, some pupils are worried about it. Other serious cases of misbehaviour, including racist language and sexual harassment, are not thoroughly dealt with or followed up.

The school has put in place a PSHE curriculum which covers topics such as first aid and online safety. However, the school has not checked how well the curriculum is working in practice. Teachers have not received sufficient guidance on how to teach subject content and make the curriculum meaningful and relevant to the school's context. As a result, the curriculum is not effective in supporting the school's aim to promote pupils' wider development. For example, the school is not doing enough to ensure that pupils celebrate equality and diversity, and show respect for each other. Pupils throughout the school use racist language casually, as part of their day-to-day conversations. Incidents of homophobic behaviour are not adequately addressed.

Pupils like being able to take part in the range of clubs on offer as well as valuable enrichment activities, such as educational outings. The school is also working on further developing the opportunities for pupil leadership, where pupils take on roles such as global champions and digital ambassadors.

From early years to Year 6, the school does not consistently support pupils with SEND to know and remember more. Approaches to identifying and meeting pupils' needs are inconsistent, and often weak. This means that some pupils who need additional support and adaptations do not receive them. Staff lack clear and sufficient guidance on how to support pupils with SEND. In some cases, pupils with the most complex needs are supported by the staff with the least expertise. This means that their needs remain unmet, and they are not learning well.

The school has taken a number of steps to address curriculum deficiencies. For example, new curriculum planning has been put in place for many subjects from early years to Year 6. However, reduced leadership capacity has severely hampered the school's work to make sure that teachers fully receive the support they need to implement the curriculum well. Therefore, pupils have a varied experience of learning and are often not able to build on previous knowledge. Pupils' outcomes in national assessments demonstrate the neglect that the curriculum has had over recent years.

Leaders prioritise reading from the beginning of Reception. The school launched a new phonics scheme last academic year. Staff received training and have ongoing access to guidance materials to help them to further refine their teaching. Overall, the recent improvements made to early reading mean that pupils are supported to build their reading fluency over time. Any gaps in pupils' knowledge are identified through regular assessments, with extra support put in place to address the things that pupils are struggling with. Nevertheless, some aspects of the school's approach to early reading are not as effective as they need to be. While most pupils' reading books match their stage of phonics learning, they also take home books to practise with that are not decodable. This can confuse pupils. In addition, in some instances, staff's subject knowledge in how to teach phonics is not secure, and this affects how well they support pupils' development as readers.

Staff are supportive of the interim leadership arrangements and are keen to work with leaders at all levels to bring about improvements. They were especially positive about the support they are offered with their well-being.

The school works successfully with parents to improve pupils' attendance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils with SEND are not identified or supported promptly or effectively. This means that they do not learn and remember the intended curriculum. The school should increase its capacity to identify and plan effective provision for these pupils. All staff should receive further training so that they have the expertise needed to understand and meet pupils' needs, including making appropriate adaptations to help pupils to learn well.
- There is insufficient leadership capacity to fully identify and implement the changes which are needed to improve pupils' education and wider experiences of school life. This includes making sure that the curriculum in all subjects is taught well and enables pupils to achieve successfully. This means that pupils are not currently receiving an acceptable education. The school should prioritise making sure that suitable leadership arrangements are in place, so that the areas in need of improvement can be identified and addressed urgently and that these improvements can be maintained over time.
- The school does not have clearly defined and understood behaviour policies that are applied consistently. This means that behaviour causes disruption to learning in lessons. Pupils regularly use discriminatory language, and bullying is not dealt with effectively. The school must review its policies and practices. It should ensure that staff understand and apply agreed approaches to securing good behaviour, including using rewards and consequences, consistently and fairly.

Staff should receive suitable training and guidance, so that they can put the revised policies and procedures into practice.

- Pupils are not currently receiving a consistent and carefully planned PSHE curriculum. This has led to many instances where pupils do not celebrate equality and diversity. For instance, many pupils use racist language freely. The school should evaluate the current PSHE curriculum and put in place a curriculum that fully supports pupils' development. Staff will need thorough training to deliver the new curriculum, and the school should monitor the success of this.

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	101497
Local authority	Brent
Inspection number	10296589
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	872
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Farha Patel
Headteacher	Martyn Boxall
Website	www.byroncourtschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 March 2012, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is currently being led by an acting headteacher, who has been in post since September 2023. The substantive headteacher was absent from the school during this inspection.
- The headteacher and the governing body have changed since the last inspection.
- Since the last inspection, the school has increased to five forms per year group.
- Leaders use one unregistered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- 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.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They held discussions with representatives of the local authority and members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, history, mathematics, physical education and science. The inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning and met with subject leaders and teachers.
- The inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- The inspectors spoke to pupils during lesson visits. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. The inspectors spoke to staff about behaviour and about their workload in the school.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents, pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Luke Stubbles, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Samantha Ingram	His Majesty's Inspector
Alison Martin	Ofsted Inspector
Georgina Herry	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Murphy	His Majesty's Inspector

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