

Byron Primary School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	118559
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	312990
Inspection dates	1–2 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	491
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Stone
Headteacher	James Fernie
Date of previous school inspection	21 October 2002
School address	Byron Road Gillingham ME7 5XX
Telephone number	01634 852981
Fax number	01634 577886

Age group	4–11
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to factual inaccuracy

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primary schools, with more boys than girls. A much higher than average proportion of pupils speaks English as an additional language, and many are at an early stage of English language acquisition. More pupils join the school after the normal time of entry than in most schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Byron provides its pupils with a satisfactory quality of education and has good features to its work. Parents and carers are confident in the significant strengths the school brings to their children's care and its positive ethos for learning. Many commented specifically on the help and support for individual pupils, illustrated by one comment, 'Teaching staff understand that some children have different needs and are always there to offer their support when you need them'.

Children develop positive attitudes to learning and make good gains in their social development in the Foundation Stage, giving them a sound start to school. Sound teaching through the school enables pupils to make satisfactory progress from low starting points. Standards are significantly lower than national averages throughout the school. The school's data show that there are differences in the achievements of some groups. Generally, pupils in the school for a long time make more progress from their starting points than those joining later. Boys outperform girls in mathematics but do not do as well as them in writing. The school has recently developed systems to monitor pupils' progress precisely and is working closely with the local authority to ensure that teaching and the curriculum meet the needs of all pupils. Staff now have the confidence to extend these initiatives further because the headteacher and senior leaders have helped teachers to reflect on the effectiveness of new approaches and their impact on pupils' achievements. Consequently, standards in the Year 6 tests have improved and the school has a sound capacity to improve further. Pupils enjoy school and lessons, indeed one parent commented, 'My son enjoys school so much that he complains when the holidays come round'. Pupils say that teachers make learning fun and particularly like the use of games to consolidate learning. However, teachers do not always challenge pupils enough in lessons, or require them to articulate their thinking and reflect enough on their own learning.

Relationships throughout the school are very positive as a result of the school's outstanding success in developing pupils' personal qualities. Behaviour is exemplary, reflecting the very encouraging ethos of the school, high expectations of behaviour, and the positive impact of the mentoring systems. A parent summarised the impact of the school's approach on pupils' personal development in the comment, 'a good bunch of pupils'. The school's very effective work with a range of external agencies helps pupils settle into the school quickly and they are confident that there is always an adult to offer help and support. Pupils' primary school experiences and achievement of basic skills give them the necessary basis for secondary education. Pupils know that it is important to stay safe, be healthy and make a positive contribution to society. Pupils show a clear sense of community and feel some pride in the local community. They raise money for local and national charities and develop economic awareness and enterprise skills very well, for example in the 'Boffins and Bodgers' club.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children in the Foundation Stage have a sound start to their formal education. The recently refurbished accommodation provides good facilities, providing an exciting environment for young children to flourish and learn. Parents comment on how quickly children settle and adults make learning fun. They see their children make progress within a short time.

Children come from a variety of pre-school settings and, although the range of attainment is broad, overall it is significantly lower than expected for their age. Children make particularly good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and reach levels in line with expectations by the end of the Foundation Stage, but have lower language and number skills than expected for their age. Staff have introduced a number of new initiatives this year intended to bring about faster progress, particularly in literacy. Already these are showing some success. The good ratio of adults and their knowledge of the needs of individuals contribute significantly to children's experiences. Adults successfully give particular attention to keeping children engaged in dialogue and discussion to develop their speech and language.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in boys' writing, girls' mathematics, and overall standards in Years 1 and 2 by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do and by involving them more actively in discussion.
- Implement the plans to use the information from pupils' work and assessments to set work to match their needs more closely.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy from their below average start in Year 1. The standards at the end of Year 2 vary from year to year because of the differing needs and capabilities of the pupils in each year group, but are below national averages. Pupils continue to achieve satisfactorily in Years 3 to 6. Although overall standards remain below average in the Year 6 tests, they have improved steadily for the last four years, reflecting the good achievement of a proportion of pupils and changes made to the teaching of basic skills in the last few years. Pupils who are in the school through the whole of the key stage make faster progress than those who join later, many of whom have significant learning or emotional needs which, together with the disruption to their education through moving schools, limit the progress they make. Pupils who join the school speaking little English make good progress in acquiring English language skills and make satisfactory progress in other subjects. The school's data show that, in general, boys do not perform as well as girls in writing but outperform girls in mathematics by a greater amount than found nationally. This is a particular focus for improvement this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils respond well to the respect they are given in the school. They have a sure sense of themselves and the confidence to engage politely and enthusiastically with those they meet. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their social development is a particular strength, and pupils are familiar with the diversity of cultures both in contemporary Britain and within the school. Pupils work together well. They show commitment to the school council, although its profile and impact could be raised. A few parents feel that pupils' views are not valued to the extent that they might be. Pupils feel safe and say that on the rare occasions when bullying occurs, it is dealt with effectively. Pupils manage the constraints of

the confined playground space with some assurance, and few incidents or accidents. Pupils have a good understanding of the healthy lifestyle agenda and younger pupils have fruit daily, although this is not carried through consistently in their choice of packed lunch items.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Lessons in all years have a clear focus and structure. Staff teamwork is a strength and the role of teaching assistants is carefully planned to make best use of their skills, particularly in helping groups of lower attaining pupils. Pupils' interest is held well through practical activities and stimulating resources. Activities are well organised and teachers have high expectations for pupils' attentiveness so that lessons are calm and orderly. However, teachers do not always build on this by expecting pupils to take an active enough part in discussions, to work quickly and to check their work carefully. Tasks are adjusted for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and this is generally successful. However, tasks do not always match the abilities or needs of all pupils closely enough, particularly in the mixed-age classes. Marking points out successes, but does not always make it clear to pupils exactly what they have to do to correct their work or make it better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A recent emphasis has been placed on developing literacy and information and communication technology skills, and this has begun to improve performance in these subjects. However, the school recognises that more needs to be done to develop literacy and numeracy skills by using them more frequently in other subjects and by broadening the range of activities to raise achievement in boys' writing and girls' mathematics. The curriculum is enriched through the introduction of French from Year 3 onwards. Provision for the large number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory and their individual education plans have clear targets. Some pupils benefit from a regular programme of extra help before school to boost their basic skills.

Learning is extended well through a good range of special events, visits and visitors, including those from the church and local community. The range of clubs is wide, with particular strengths in the arts and technology. For instance, the school recently became 'The Junior Engineer School of the Year' and the choir performs at a high level, such as in the local cathedral. Such clubs offer opportunities for gifted and talented pupils, who also benefit from the school's link with the Medway Children's University.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Adults promote pupils' safety, welfare and emotional well-being very successfully, making provision for pupils' personal development outstanding. The school ethos is underpinned by well established and effective systems, clearly defined areas of responsibility, good communication and rigorous monitoring. These structures ensure that the school is adept at managing the relatively high levels of pupil mobility and integrating newcomers quickly. Pupils are confident that there is always an adult to support them. The school has good links with

external agencies, ensuring that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. Recent changes to monitoring pupils' progress are helping to identify underperformance more readily, but the school recognises the need to use this information effectively to plan work which closely matches pupils' prior attainment. Pupils generally know their individual targets in literacy and numeracy but teachers do not regularly refer to these when they mark pupils' work so that opportunities are missed to channel pupils' efforts, thereby raising their achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, closely supported by staff and governors, has successfully developed a welcoming family atmosphere in which pupils from a wide range of backgrounds feel happy and well cared for. The recent restructuring of the senior management team has refocused key areas of the school's work. Improved assessment information is helping senior staff to evaluate school performance more accurately, and almost all of the inspectors' judgements agree with those made by the school. Subject leaders have begun to monitor more rigorously the strengths and weaknesses of provision across the school. As a result, resources are used effectively and useful extra help is given to individuals and groups. However, a number of these initiatives have not yet had time to improve standards significantly. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body has tightened its committee structures, increased its involvement in school life since the previous inspection and taken advantage of external training so that governors are now more able to support and challenge the school.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

3 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Byron Primary School, Gillingham, ME7 5XX

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited recently. We very much enjoyed meeting you and we found what you had to say very useful.

These are the main things we found out about your school:

- You enjoy school a lot because of all the interesting things you have to do.
- Those of you who have just joined a Reception class have settled quickly and enjoy learning a lot.
- You do interesting things in lessons, particularly when teachers give you games to practise your skills.
- You work quite hard and make sound progress in improving your literacy and numeracy skills, which helps you in other topics.
- You get on well together and behave exceptionally well in lessons and in the playground, which keeps everyone safe.
- You understand about the best things to eat and why it is good to exercise.
- You enjoy taking responsibility for things like assemblies, the school council and fund raising for others.
- The headteacher and the staff think carefully about how well the school is doing and introduce new things when they think something needs improving.
- You get a sound foundation for secondary school and this is appreciated by your parents and carers.

What we have asked the school to do now:

- Make sure that you are always stretched to do your best in the time you have in lessons and that you are given activities where you can discuss things together. This should help boys make their writing better and girls improve their mathematics, as well as helping younger pupils to make faster progress.
- Use the information from your work and assessments to give you work which is not too easy for some of you and not too hard for others.

We hope that you will continue to work hard and to enjoy your time at Byron Primary School. We wish you every success in the future.

Best wishes

Helen Hutchings Lead inspector

3 November 2007



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Helen Hutchings
Lead inspector