

Bryony School

Marshall Road, Rainham, Gillingham, Kent ME8 0AJ

Inspection dates

19–21 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have successfully made improvements to ensure that the school complies with the independent school standards.
- Leaders have ensured that the school has maintained the good standards in teaching and good outcomes for pupils identified in the previous inspection. Effective teaching enables pupils to make good progress from their starting points.
- The new advisory board and the increased responsibility of the business manager have considerably strengthened the leadership of the school.
- Arrangements to keep pupils safe from harm meet statutory requirements. Pupils are safe and feel safe at school. However, some record keeping could be strengthened.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to make choices about their learning or to contribute to improvements in the school.
- Pupils behave well throughout the school day. Attendance rates are high because pupils enjoy school.
- Children make a good start to school in early years, including in the provision for two-year-olds. The leadership of the early years provision has been strengthened.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils benefit from a wide range of visits, trips and extra-curricular clubs that enhance their learning and social skills.
- The leadership of teaching is not as strong as it could be. Teachers are not aware of how to improve their teaching to accelerate pupils' progress further.
- The most able pupils are not consistently challenged in lessons. Sometimes the work they are given is too easy.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the leadership of teaching so that:
 - the proprietor, advisory board and headteacher have an accurate view of the quality of teaching throughout the school
 - teachers know how to improve their teaching further, enabling pupils to make faster progress
 - teachers are confident in using a range of strategies to challenge the most able pupils.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to make choices about their learning and to have a greater influence on improving the school.
- Ensure that records are kept of all safeguarding, behaviour and bullying concerns, however minor, according to the school's policies.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have been successful at improving many aspects of the school since the previous inspection. This includes improvements to safeguarding arrangements and therefore pupils' personal development, including for children in early years. Leaders were also quick to make required improvements to the premises. As a result of these improvements, and subsequent monitoring by leaders, all of the independent school standards are met.
- The school's aim to provide pupils with 'opportunities to reach their academic, creative and physical potential, in a stimulating, caring, safe and inclusive learning environment' is now being achieved. However, leaders are not complacent. Their self-evaluation is accurate, and leaders know that there is more to do to make the school even better.
- The vast majority of parents are happy with the school. One parent explained how their children loved school: 'They go in and come out smiling. They are progressing very well, both academically and personally.'
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and gives pupils a wide range of experiences in and out of school. Class teachers and subject specialists ensure that pupils develop their knowledge well in a wide range of subjects. However, the development of pupils' skills in some subjects, such as art, is less well planned.
- Extra-curricular provision is strong and gives pupils a wide range of additional experiences, such as visits to the dockyard and local wildlife centres. Additional opportunities for a wide range of pupils to take part in competitive sport have led to considerable success.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very effective because of well-planned experiences and activities. Pupils are tolerant of each other's differences and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Staff agree that leadership has improved throughout the school, because, for example, communication is better. The business manager has played an important part in this. There is effective management of the two school sites. Good transition arrangements mean that pupils are well prepared to move from the infant school to the junior school.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are not directly leading to improvements in teaching. Leaders rarely evaluate the quality of pupils' work as part of their assessment of the quality of teaching. Leaders do not routinely provide teachers with feedback to help them improve their teaching. However, teachers are currently benefiting from a much wider range of professional development opportunities, including from local teaching school alliances.

Governance

- The advisory board has strengthened the overall quality of leadership of the school by adding an additional level of scrutiny.

- The proprietors appreciate the support and challenge from the advisory board, which helps them check that all of the independent school standards have been met.
- The chair of the advisory board has known the school for an extended period of time. He is now able to offer an objective view about what is working well and what needs to improve. Additionally, he recognises that the board's impact could be further improved by the appointment of additional members with relevant skills but no previous connection to the school.
- Members of the advisory board visit the school regularly so that they understand first-hand the views of leaders, staff, pupils and parents.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff have all received up-to-date training and know how to report any concerns they may have about pupils. Teachers know their pupils well and are aware of the risks and dangers they may face in and out of school, for example when using online technology.
- Pupils are taught to stay safe. Visiting speakers, including from the police and safeguarding charities, ensure that pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe in a range of contexts.
- Checks on staff and volunteers are completed in line with statutory guidance. These checks are recorded systematically on a well-organised single central record. Other record keeping is not organised so efficiently. Not all (minor) concerns about pupils' welfare are recorded in a timely manner. Nonetheless, staff, parents and pupils are confident that Bryony School is a safe place.
- The school's safeguarding policy meets the latest statutory requirements and is published on the school website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and, in many cases, a passion for their subjects. This, together with their high expectations about behaviour, lead to pupils being highly engaged in their lessons. There are positive relationships between adults and pupils throughout the school.
- Lessons are planned well. Teachers use effective questioning to make pupils think. In lessons, teachers check how well pupils are progressing and give them additional support or challenge as necessary to help them succeed. However, sometimes the most able pupils are not given challenging work straightaway. Pupils who have fallen behind are given additional support to help them catch up.
- Pupils have frequent opportunities to apply their reading and writing skills in a range of subjects. For example, Year 4 pupils accurately applied their measuring skills using metre sticks and trundle wheels in an athletics lesson to see how their performance was improving.
- Where teaching is strongest, assessment is used well to help pupils to improve their work. In key stage 2 science, for example, pupils have the opportunity to make choices in their

learning when carrying out personalised research. In other subjects, pupils have fewer opportunities to make choices about how they structure their work. Sometimes, pupils receive only limited guidance to help them improve their work.

- Parents are very positive about the homework the school provides. This helps pupils to reinforce their knowledge and skills, especially in English and mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Well-planned curriculum activities, together with thought-provoking assemblies and a range of cultural visits and trips, contribute to pupils' good personal development.
- Healthy lifestyles are promoted well through the wide variety of games and sports pupils can engage in, both in curriculum time and as part of extra-curricular clubs and activities.
- Older pupils take on additional responsibilities as captains and monitors. However, pupils told inspectors that they would like more opportunities to take on greater responsibility for their learning.
- The very many pupils that inspectors spoke to have no concerns about bullying or name-calling. However, a minority of parents are concerned that this is a problem. Leaders are confident that there is a misunderstanding of the term 'bullying'. Despite this, leaders have not done enough to reassure some parents that bullying is not an issue.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in class because teachers have high expectations. The new behaviour policy is implemented fairly, and this ensures that pupils always do their best.
- When moving around the school, pupils are sensible and careful, for example when going up and down stairs.
- Attendance is good – pupils enjoy coming to school. Arrangements to transport pupils between the school sites are helpful to parents and mean that pupils are rarely late.
- Pupils take pride in their work and present it neatly. Handwriting is generally very neat and legible.
- Teachers and leaders do not consistently record the infrequent incidents of minor misbehaviour. Neither do they follow the school's policy by recording how incidents are followed up.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The vast majority of pupils make good progress from their starting points in a range of subjects. This is because of the good teaching pupils receive and their positive attitudes to learning.

- Pupils have well-developed speaking and listening skills and are confident readers. They make good progress in early reading due to the effective teaching of phonics.
- Planned support for pupils who have fallen behind or who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities helps them to catch up. These pupils feel well supported and believe that they are improving.
- Attainment at age-related expectations at the end of each key stage is broadly in line with national averages. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards is less strong. This is because assessment information is not used well enough to consistently challenge the most able pupils.
- Pupils make more rapid progress where assessment information is used to challenge them. For example, in key stage 2 science, pupils' attainment and progress are much stronger than in other subjects.
- Leaders and teachers ensure that pupils are well prepared for the move from the infant to the junior site through a range of well-planned transition activities. Most pupils who leave the junior school are well prepared for their secondary education.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision has been strengthened by new strong leadership that has brought more rigour to planning, teaching and assessment. Effective use has been made of external consultants to help leaders to make improvements, including in the outdoor area.
- Children's welfare is paramount. The high staffing ratios and extensive training, including in paediatric first aid, ensure that children in early years are well cared for and nurtured.
- Children make good progress from their starting points in all areas of learning. In the Reception classes, children's literacy and numeracy skills are developed well. Teachers use assessment information accurately and carefully to plan appropriate activities. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development is above the national average. As a result, children are well prepared for Year 1.
- In the provision for two- and three-year-olds, early reading and mathematics are taught well. For example, some of the youngest children were searching for items that started with the 'sh' sound, such as shells and (toy) sharks in the water tray. Any additional needs are quickly recognised by adults, and additional support is put in place.
- Adults interact with children well and help to develop their learning and play. However, more could be done to enable children to make their own choices and to develop reading and writing in the outdoor environment.
- The curriculum is well planned and makes good use of both the indoor and outdoor environment. It is further enhanced by regular excursions. For example, the pre-school class visited a local wildlife park during the inspection.
- Children are confident to talk about their learning and share their ideas. Behaviour is very good. Everyone, from the very youngest children, has well developed social skills and knows how to take turns.

- Parents are positive about the good start their children make to their education at Bryony. They contribute regularly to their children's learning by celebrating 'wow' moments at home.

School details

Unique reference number	118979
DfE registration number	887/6001
Inspection number	10047025

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

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	136
Number of part-time pupils	21
Proprietor	Mrs M P Edmunds
Principal	Mr D E Edmunds
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,000 to £6,511
Telephone number	01634 231511
Website	www.bryonyschool.org.uk
Email address	office@bryonyschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–6 May 2016

Information about this school

- Bryony School is a non-selective independent day preparatory school in Rainham, Kent. The school caters for boys and girls between the ages of two and 11.
- 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 between two and seven years old. 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, 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 minibus between the school sites.
- There are no pupils with an education, health and care plan.
- The principal is the proprietor's husband. They have together appointed an advisory board to provide support and challenge to school leaders.
- The last full inspection took place in May 2016, when the school was judged to be inadequate. A subsequent progress monitoring visit in January 2017 found that all the previously unmet independent school standards had been met.

Information about this inspection

- Throughout the inspection, meetings were held with the principal, business manager and deputy headteacher. Additional meetings were held with other staff, the proprietor and the chair of the advisory board.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a range of subjects across both school sites. Some of the observations were carried out with the principal or deputy headteacher. When they visited classrooms, inspectors spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at their work. Inspectors heard a few pupils read in class.
- A meeting was held with a group of pupils and there were further informal discussions with pupils at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors took account of 45 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and spoke to parents at both sites before school. One parent asked to meet with an inspector.
- Responses to 19 completed confidential staff questionnaires were considered.
- Inspectors toured both sites and looked at a wide range of school documentation to check compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Lee Selby, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jo Jones

Ofsted Inspector

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