

Inspection of Bishops Down Primary and Nursery School

Rydal Drive, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9SU

Inspection dates:

1 to 2 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend this happy, inclusive school where they celebrate diversity. They feel safe and have secure, positive relationships with each other and staff. Pupils enjoy learning new things alongside their peers. The staff know and care for the pupils well and work with families to ensure help is readily available. Parents are positive about the school. They comment on how well staff support them and their children.

High expectations exist across the school. Pupils are respectful and kind to each other. Pupils learn to accept each other's differences. They show this in their positive behaviours towards each other when they work together in lessons. Pupils play cooperatively at break and lunchtimes ensuring that no one feels left out. The school's recent improvements in pupils' behaviour and attitudes towards learning are recognised and valued by the whole school community.

Staff have high ambitions for all pupils to succeed academically. However, how well pupils learn is inconsistent. Previous weaknesses in the teaching of the school's curriculum mean that pupils have some gaps in their knowledge. Pupils do take pride in their work and want to be successful. They are making progress, but the school recognises further improvements are needed to ensure pupils are fully prepared for the next stages of learning.

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

Following a period of changes in staffing and within the governing body, the school have worked effectively to help bring stability. Additional external support has ensured the start of the much-needed improvements to the curriculum. The planned curriculum is well considered and starts from the Reception Year through to Year 6. The planning across each subject reflects the schools' high ambition for all pupils. However, in many subjects, these improvements have just begun. Staff are still developing their understanding and expertise of what should be taught and when. The activities pupils complete are, therefore, not always clearly linked to the intended learning. As a result, pupils have gaps in their knowledge, and many can find it difficult to understand any new learning.

The school have rightly prioritised developing the curriculum in English and mathematics from the early years onwards. As part of these improvements, the way in which pupils learn to write has been strengthened. Some of these improvements are relatively new and the full impact of these changes on pupils' achievement is yet to be seen.

Reading has a high profile across the school. Children begin to learn to read as soon as they start school in the early years. Pupils receive some extra support to help them catch up, although the school recognises the need to ensure this is consistently delivered to all pupils who need it. In addition, the books that pupils read do not always match the sounds they know. This means that pupils do not

always get the practise they need to become fluent, accurate readers. Older pupils enjoy reading and can identify the authors and genres of books they prefer.

In the early years, like elsewhere in the school, there are positive relationships between staff and children. Children engage in a range of different activities with enthusiasm. Yet there is often not enough careful thought that ensures activity choices are preparing the children well for the next steps in their development. Similarly, while staff are aware that communication is an essential area of development for children, opportunities to model and encourage pupils to talk are not consistently used well enough.

There is a high ambition for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and staff quickly identify pupils with SEND. Pupils receive the right support at the right time, including those pupils who access the resource provision. This allows them to learn the same curriculum as their peers.

Pupils behave well and show positive attitudes. Pastoral support is a strength of the school as it helps pupils begin to understand and manage their feelings. Pupils appreciate the care that staff take to help them explore their worries and emotions. While many pupils attend school regularly, there is a minority of pupils who have much higher rates of absence and therefore miss too much of their education. The school's actions to address this are showing some impact and this work continues.

Pupils have a keen sense of acceptance and fairness. They understand why these concepts are important in society. Pupils learn about different religions, cultures and family circumstances. They value the opportunities to build their own individual interests through the range of clubs and activities on offer.

There is consideration to staff workload and well-being, without compromising efforts to make further improvements to the school. Governors support and challenge the school fairly as it continues to improve the quality of education for pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has yet to fully implement a consistent approach to the teaching of reading. In some instances, books are not precisely matched to the sounds that pupils have learned and know. Staff expertise is not yet fully consistent across the school. As a result, some pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise and become fluent readers. The school should continue to support staff

professional development and ensure that all books are matched closely to individual pupils' phonic knowledge.

- Improvements across the whole school curriculum are in the early stages of implementation. As a result, pupils have gaps in their knowledge, meaning they cannot always remember key knowledge and make links with their previous learning. The school should ensure that these curriculum improvements are quickly put in place to ensure pupils are prepared for their next steps of learning.
- Staff do not always use checks to see if pupils are secure in their knowledge and skills before moving on to new learning. This is across the school, including in early years. As a result, learning activities are not always adapted carefully enough to help pupils achieve well across the curriculum. The school should continue to develop teachers' expertise to support pupils' learning and development.

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	118468
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10287916
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	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Co-Chairs of governing body	Alice Morgan and Freya Melkonian
Headteacher	Julie Burton (Interim executive headteacher)
Website	www.bishopsdownprimary.org
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 July 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has seen several changes in leadership. The current executive headteacher is interim. She is supported by two acting headteachers.
- The school operates a resourced provision for pupils with physical disabilities and complex medical needs. This is for seven pupils with education, health and care plans.
- The school's nursery has provision for three- and four-year-old children.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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.
- During this inspection, inspectors held meetings with the interim executive headteacher, acting headteachers, special educational needs coordinator, teachers and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design and history. In each subject, inspectors met with subject leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to adults. Other aspects of the school's curriculum were also considered.
- 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.
- The inspection team took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies, local authority reports and governor minutes.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the free-text comments that were submitted. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff survey and gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Numera Anwar, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Liz McIntosh

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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