

Inspection of Byron Primary School

Byron Road, Gillingham, Kent ME7 5XX

Inspection dates:	5 and 6 November 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Jon Carthy. This school is part of The Westbrook Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Oliver Allen, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Norley.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour. Pupils are keen to do their best to meet these aims. They behave well and they like the way the school celebrates their achievements. School routines are clear and well established. These support children in the early years to make a strong start to their time in school. Overall, pupils achieve well, and they enjoy being at school.

Pupils value having the chance to contribute to their school community. They are proud that the school's food bank collections help those in need. After working with environmental organisations, pupils have campaigned to reduce plastic waste in school. They feel that staff are always willing to listen and help them.

The school helps pupils to become more resilient, and to communicate well with one another. In the early years, staff help children to learn new games and to play imaginatively. Adventurous expeditions help to foster older pupils' self-confidence. Pupils can take part in a wide range of musical opportunities. As well as the choir and instrumental lessons, pupils are supported to take part in musical productions at the local theatre. Pupils, parents and carers appreciate these and other opportunities that the school provides.

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

The school has made vital improvements across many aspects of pupils' learning. Reading is central among these. Phonics is taught well, and straight away from the start of the Reception Year. Pupils enjoy the stories and other texts that staff provide for them. Books are matched carefully to the letters and sounds that pupils know. Weaker readers catch up quickly thanks to personalised support. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), become confident readers.

Many areas of the curriculum have been changed in the last two years. In almost all subjects, teachers are clear about the knowledge and skills pupils should develop. They provide helpful explanations, tasks and resources that enable pupils to learn well. However, there are variations in how well teachers build pupils' knowledge and, in particular, vocabulary in some subjects. Where this is strong, such as in religious education, pupils can explain their ideas with precision. At other times, pupils' grasp of the specific language needed for their learning is not as secure. This results in them being unclear in aspects of their understanding.

Pupils' learning in key stage 2 is stronger than published outcomes indicate, especially in mathematics. Teachers make sure that pupils revisit and strengthen their understanding of topics they have studied before. This helps all pupils, and particularly those with SEND, to embed new learning effectively. Pupils gain confidence in using their number skills to solve problems. In English and mathematics, teachers build up a detailed picture of what pupils know and can do. Staff use this information to steer and shape further learning for pupils. However, in some subjects, teachers are not consistent about checking for

mistakes in pupils' work. This can lead to some errors and gaps in pupils' knowledge persisting over time. When new pupils join the school, teachers help them to catch up with current learning swiftly. Teachers are alert to identifying potential learning needs. Leaders make sure that all staff understand how to meet the needs of pupils with SEND.

Staff set out clear routines for the classroom. This helps to ensure that lesson time is productive for all pupils. Children in the early years quickly adopt the habits that the school intends. Pupils who find it harder to manage their behaviour receive individual help from staff. The school offers substantial support for pupils' well-being, and for their families as well. From uniform swaps to home visits, the school works closely with parents. This contributes to the strength of the school's efforts to improve attendance.

The school helps pupils to understand their diverse community. Pupils enjoy visiting a range of local places of worship. Assemblies and workshops help them to understand rights and responsibilities. Pupils learn about positive relationships and how to keep themselves safe. If they need some space in which to think and reflect, the school supports this through supervised calm spaces at lunchtime.

The school and the trust have responded directly to previous weaknesses in the school. Leaders have strengthened teachers' knowledge of the curriculum and teaching strategies. Staff feel well supported by this, and by leaders' approach to considering their workload. Those responsible for governance take an active role in supporting and challenging leaders. This helps to establish a culture of continuous improvement in the school.

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 do not develop the depth of knowledge and, in particular, vocabulary that the curriculum intends and requires of them. As a result, their written and spoken language can lack precision, hampering their readiness for the next stage of learning. The school must extend and deepen pupils' vocabulary and the specific knowledge that goes along with this.
- Teachers do not always check for and correct errors in pupils' work. This can lead to mistakes persisting and not being addressed quickly enough. The school needs to ensure that teachers are more systematic about identifying gaps in pupils' understanding and correcting them swiftly.

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	142399
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10341795
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	519
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Norley
CEO of the trust	Oliver Allen
Headteacher	Jon Carthy
Website	www.byron.medway.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Byron Primary School is part of The Westbrook Trust.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

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

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with school leaders, including the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. The inspectors also met with the CEO of the trust, and representatives of the board of trustees and local governing board.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents, including through Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, design and technology, history and English. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also discussed the curriculum and provision for pupils with SEND, and sampled work from other areas of the curriculum.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, governors, staff, parents and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- As part of the inspection evidence, inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for school staff.

Inspection team

Daniel Botting, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Catherine Hylands	Ofsted Inspector
Jenny Ashley-Jones	Ofsted Inspector

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