

Brightlingsea Junior School

Eastern Road, Brightlingsea, Colchester, CO7 0HU

Inspection dates 4–5 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Strong leadership from the headteacher, senior leaders and governors has led to improvements, since the previous inspection, in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Teaching is good with almost all teachers adept at asking challenging questions and having high expectations of their pupils, with the result that standards are improving across the school.
- Pupils receive frequent feedback on how well they are doing and how to improve their work. Learning support assistants are well trained and provide valuable guidance to pupils.
- Staff provide good support for disadvantaged pupils and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, so that they make good progress.
- Pupils behave well at all times and have very positive attitudes to learning. They are keen to learn subjects and topics that are made interesting for them and they try hard to do well.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered. There are strong relationships across the school between adults and pupils and amongst pupils themselves.
- The school successfully promotes all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Pupils' understanding of British values is good.
- Governors visit the school frequently and are well informed about its work. They provide a strong level of support and challenge.
- Good use of additional sports funding ensures that pupils achieve well in sporting activities.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, the work given to the most-able pupils, particularly in writing, is not challenging enough.
- Not all teachers ensure pupils act on the advice they receive from teachers' marking.
- Teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to write in depth in a range of subjects outside of literacy lessons.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils’ learning in 19 lessons or parts of lessons, including examples of teaching in every year group, as well as an assembly. Two lesson observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils’ books, across all four year groups, to establish their progress and the quality of their work over time.
- Inspectors talked with groups of pupils as well as individual pupils during lessons and at playtimes to find out their views about the school.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, talked to them about the books they enjoy and observed their behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors talked informally with parents at the start and end of the school day to gauge their views of the school. They took account of 77 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent view) and analysed 110 responses to the school’s own parental questionnaires. They reviewed two written communications received from parents and 41 responses from staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, governors, the national leader of education supporting the school and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school’s analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and plans for improvement, external monitoring reports, records of checks made by leaders and information on pupils’ attainment and their progress. They also scrutinised teachers’ planning, records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, records of checks on the quality of teaching and the targets set for teachers to improve their work, and minutes of the governing body.

Inspection team

Desmond Dunne, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Vreta Bagilhole

Additional Inspector

Chris Ingate

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most junior schools.
- Most pupils are of white British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average and none are in the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which sets out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is supported by a national leader in education (NLE), who is the headteacher of St Thomas More's Catholic Primary School.
- The school is a member of the Colne cluster partnership, which is a group of schools who support each other.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding and raise standards, particularly in writing by:
 - ensuring all teachers encourage pupils to act on the marking guidance they receive that shows them how to improve their work
 - making sure that teachers consistently set the most-able pupils challenging activities in all subjects, but particularly in writing, that enable them to make the greatest possible progress
 - extending opportunities for all pupils to write at length and depth in different subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and governors have, since the previous inspection, created effective systems and procedures which have improved the quality of teaching and learning across the school. There has been a resolute drive and determination to use local partners effectively to improve provision and thereby enhance the learning opportunities offered to pupils. Pupils have responded very well. They behave well and are keen to learn.
- Leaders have successfully promoted the key theme of 'believe and achieve' to ensure all staff become involved in school improvement. By setting teachers and pupils challenging targets, school leaders have tackled previous inconsistencies in teaching and learning so that attainment is rising, particularly in mathematics, spelling, grammar and punctuation. Parents are also engaged effectively in this programme, to support their children in taking more responsibility for their homework. The school makes good use of 'learning logs' to extend pupils' opportunities to develop their learning by linking homework to activities completed in the classroom. These make a significant contribution to pupils' achievement.
- Senior leaders check the quality of teaching frequently. This ensures that teachers are clear about what makes effective teaching. Leaders' good use of regular progress meetings to discuss lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work, analysis of data and surveys of the views of pupils' ensures that any dips in progress are addressed quickly. Leaders at all levels provide coaching for individual teachers, including teachers from other schools, to improve their teaching.
- Subject and other middle leadership is good. These leaders are increasingly effective in their roles. They are participating successfully in a local three-year leadership development programme and this has helped them to improve teaching and pupils' achievement in the school. They are keen, enthusiastic and knowledgeable about what needs to be done. Leaders are aware, for instance, that, on occasion, the most-able pupils are not stretched sufficiently, particularly when writing in subjects other than literacy.
- The school uses its pupil premium funding effectively to staff small teaching groups for eligible pupils and to provide some one-to-one teaching. This has ensured that these pupils make good progress.
- The school promotes British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils have the opportunity to gain an understanding and knowledge of others with different beliefs and cultures. They undertake a wealth of exciting trips or activities to strengthen their knowledge of our system of government and democracy. These include meeting the mayor, holding their own meetings in the town hall or listening to visiting speakers, including governor-led assemblies and a presentation about the Magna Carta by a former judge. Pupils speak eloquently of how they treat everyone with respect, regardless of their dress code or physical attributes. As a result they are very tolerant of others in the school and there is no form of discrimination. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school has made good progress with implementing the new curriculum and places an emphasis on learning through interesting topics and themes. Leaders and managers ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Feedback from receiving secondary schools about the ability and maturity of Brightlingsea pupils is very positive.
- The primary school sports funding is used effectively. Sports coaches work well with teachers and pupils, and the school has purchased new physical education equipment to provide a wider range of activities for pupils. This has not only encouraged greater participation in sporting events, but led to success at district and regional level.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective and meet statutory requirements. Records show that the school makes regular checks on the school site and on visitors to ensure pupils are safe. Staff are trained in all relevant policies and procedures and the school provides a very safe and supportive learning environment. Parents are content that their children are safe in school.

- The local authority is providing good support through its regular visits. The headteacher makes good use of a strong network of local schools which provide good support and guidance about issues relating to leadership and teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors know their school well. They have made effective use of leadership training to improve the way that they support and challenge the school. Governors are proud of the improvements made in the school since the previous inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
 - Staff say confidently that governors are 'hands-on', visiting the school regularly to see the school's work for themselves and talk to pupils about their views of the school. Governors are highly involved with improving the quality of teaching. They oversee the school's procedures for setting targets for teachers and know that pay awards are linked to good quality teaching.
 - Governors have an accurate view of how well the school is doing compared to other schools locally and nationally. They are prepared to challenge the headteacher on decisions to achieve the best value for money. As a result, they ensure that finances are well spent.
 - The governing body checks that the pupil premium has had the intended impact on standards and that it is helping to close the attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They have positive attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons.
- Behaviour at break times, lunchtime and inside the school buildings is good. Pupils are confident and able to talk about their learning and how staff support them. They are prepared to try to work things out for themselves before asking for help, and they are helpful towards each other in lessons.
- Pupils are welcoming and highly cooperative. They work and play together in pairs and groups without fuss, helping each other to achieve. There are good relationships between staff and pupils, and pupils are respectful of adults and each other. Pupils are polite and well mannered, particularly to visitors and newcomers to the school.
- The school has a well-designed behaviour policy which is consistently applied by all staff across this school. Staff provide good role models to help pupils to develop a sense of right from wrong.
- Pupils like responsibility and enjoy serving on the school council. Many pupils are articulate and enjoy talking about their experiences.
- Pupils know and understand about different types of bullying, including cyber bullying. They do not have any concerns about bullying and they are confident they could ask adults for help. Some describe 'broken promises between friends' as a form of bullying, and there was some discussion during inspectors' meetings with pupils, about this being more about a loss of trust than bullying.
- Although not all parents are unreservedly positive about the school, many shared with inspectors positive views about how they have worked with the school. For instance, a number of parents provided letters of support, such as 'I have so many good things to say about the school and so many different examples to give'.
- The school works closely with families, using a wide range of strategies, to make sure that pupils attend regularly. However, the poor attendance of a small number of pupils has had an impact on the overall pattern of attendance for the school. Nonetheless, attendance is in line with the national average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school meets all national safeguarding requirements well and provides good support for pupils and their families who need it.

- The school is very thorough in checking the suitability of staff and visitors who work with pupils. Security systems are well established and robust.
- The school systematically keeps a record of any incidents of poor behaviour, and follows these up with parents and external agencies. The school has close relationships with local agencies that provide extra help for pupils who face problems in their lives or struggle to deal with situations. This helps pupils benefit from the care, guidance and support provided in school. One parent stated, 'I have found the school to be extremely understanding, patient and helpful'.
- The school grounds are safe and secure. Potential risks to safety are carefully assessed and, where such risks are identified, the school takes effective measures to reduce or eliminate them. The school ensures that all outings are assessed for risk of harm to pupils before trips are undertaken.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils make good progress because of the headteacher's successful drive to make improvements in the quality of teaching. Teaching has improved and is now good. Classroom environments are very positive, colourful and stimulating.
- There is now a consistent approach to planning lessons operating across the school that sets out how teachers should organise the learning for pupils of different abilities. This generally ensures that teachers pitch work at the right level for pupils and that homework is used well to reinforce reading, mathematics and topic work. However, on occasion, the work set for the most able, particularly in writing, is not challenging enough.
- Most teachers are making good use of the new curriculum to raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve. For example, in a Year 6 literacy lesson, the teacher skilfully used pupils' comments to draw together their understanding of the significance of a key meeting between Macbeth and Banquo. Pupils then produced a tableau of the event and a mini drama to exemplify the conversations that took place.
- Teachers use questioning effectively to make pupils think and to deepen their understanding. In one Year 4 lesson, the teacher used skilful questioning about the film 'Toy Story 3' to prompt pupils to produce lists of 'powerful' verbs, adverbs and adjectives that they could use in their writing.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and make sure that pupils fully understand what the different coloured comments mean. Most make helpful comments and identify mini-challenges for the pupils to complete. Consequently, most pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work. However, not all teachers insist that pupils act on the advice they receive from marking, particularly in literacy.
- The arrangements the school has established, whereby senior leaders coach members of staff to help them improve, are working well. Teachers have benefited greatly from this and from other locally-organised training. These have had a particularly positive impact on the effectiveness of teaching in mathematics, grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Teachers encourage pupils to read with adults on a daily basis. The school has given much thought to providing boys, alongside the girls, with stimulating reading books, including a well-stocked library to engage their interest. This has significantly improved their skills and enjoyment of reading.
- Teachers have taken full advantage of the opportunities offered by the new mathematics curriculum to be more ambitious in their teaching. They have used their in-school coaching, as well as the subject training they have attended, well to provide good support for pupils' mathematical skills. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils used construction kits to explore 2-dimensional nets of different shapes to produce 3-dimensional structures. Pupils are given good opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in real life situations.
- The teaching of writing is not quite as effective as that in mathematics and reading. Teachers set the

most-able pupils challenging tasks in reading and mathematics, but this is not always the case in writing. Teachers expect good quality writing in literacy lessons, but have lower expectations of what pupils will produce when writing in other subjects.

- Learning support assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning because they are well briefed by teachers and well deployed. They are well prepared for lessons and are able to support pupils well.
- Staff who work with individual disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have a clear understanding of pupils' learning difficulties and are skilled in helping them to learn.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils enter the school with above average attainment in Year 3, including in spelling, grammar and punctuation. They mostly make good progress as they move through the school in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Attainment in writing, mathematics, spelling, punctuation and grammar has improved since the previous inspection, with reading sustained at a similar level to previous years. Standards across all subjects are now broadly in line with their respective national averages because the progress made by pupils from Year 3 to 6 has improved.
- The schools' own data, and inspectors' observations of pupils' learning in lessons and work in their books, show that most Year 6 pupils are on track to attain at least expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The most recent school information on pupils for this year group shows that they achieved a faster rate of progress for the last two years, than they had done in the first two years, of Key Stage 2. Pupils made slow progress when in Years 3 and 4, but made good progress in Years 5 and 6 to make up the ground they had previously lost. Progress for other year groups is also much improved and is now consistently good. As a result, higher levels of attainment are being achieved across Key Stage 2.
- The quality of writing in pupils' 'Big Write' books is good. However, the quality of written work in subject books, such as history and geography is not of the same standard.
- Most of the most-able pupils make good progress, although this is not always the case and the proportion reaching the higher levels in writing was below average in 2014. On occasions, teachers' and pupils' own expectations are not high enough and written work across the curriculum is not challenging enough for the most-able pupils to make really rapid progress.
- Pupils read regularly and enjoy a wide range of texts.
- Pupils are given the opportunity to take part in a number of sporting activities which promote their well-being very effectively and they have become more confident participants in competitive sport. They are proud to talk about their achievements in district and regional events. The school are winners of the district primary schools sports association cup for athletics and the girls' netball team won the recent coastal storms 'Hi-5 tournament'.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive extra support according to their needs. They get help, in lessons, to tackle new topics and to help them to gain a better understanding through the repetitive use of supported literacy and numeracy skills. This support is effective in meeting their needs and these pupils make good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils receive a wide range of support which is effective in helping them to make good progress. As a result they are catching up with their classmates. In the national tests, at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014, disadvantaged pupils were more than two terms behind other pupils in the school in mathematics, and less than two terms behind them in reading and writing. Compared to other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils were more than two terms behind in each of these subjects. Current school data shows that disadvantaged pupils are two terms behind in mathematics and one term behind in Reading. This is an improvement on the previous year. The improvement in writing is not as good and the pupils remain more than a term behind their classmates.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.

School details

Unique reference number	114758
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	462103

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	330
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Alan Johnstone
Headteacher	Claire Claydon
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2013
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