Inspection of Bethersden Primary School

School Road, Bethersden, Ashford, Kent TN26 3AH

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 June 2023

Overall effectiveness	**Good**
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Early years provision	**Outstanding**
Previous inspection grade	**Good**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to come to school. They feel that they are part of a family who look after each other and are kind. Pupils know the school's values and understand the importance of respect. They show that everyone is welcome at their school. Children in Reception have an exceptional start to their education.

Pupils gain a range of opportunities beyond the classroom. These can include sport clubs, photography, careers talks and time spent in their stunning nature area. Through the school council, pupils begin to learn about becoming active citizens. They are proud to do their part and vote for positive change in the school. This helps pupils to become well-rounded citizens. Leaders ensure that all take part, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged.

From Reception to Year 6, pupils behave well and live up to staff's high expectations. Leaders have ensured that there are consistent routines in every classroom, and pupils know what is expected of them, which ensures a calm learning environment. Mostly, pupils play well together at lunchtime, enjoying the beautiful surroundings. Bullying is rare, and records show that adults resolve it quickly if it happens. Pupils feel safe at the school.

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

Over the last year, there have been numerous leadership changes. The current leaders are now settled and have taken the school on a noticeable improvement journey. This has had a positive impact on pupils' education and their enjoyment of school. Last year, not all pupils were prepared thoroughly enough to access their secondary education, particularly in reading and mathematics. Leaders have addressed this successfully by ensuring that the curriculum across the whole school is rich and balanced, and current pupils learn well. This starts in early years, where children benefit from an exceptional provision that teaches them to read, develop excellent number fluency and build a precise vocabulary. This gives them the knowledge that they need to be successful in Year 1.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They check pupils' understanding from lesson to lesson. This enables them to refine tasks and ensure that pupils learn and remember more over time. This is particularly strong for pupils with SEND. Staff know what pupils' needs are and support them effectively to access the full taught curriculum.

Reading is prioritised across the school. Staff encourage and support pupils to read widely. Pupils who need additional support with reading are identified early. Trained staff make sure that these pupils have the tools they need to decode words with confidence. This helps pupils to improve and become fluent readers.

In early years, children receive an excellent start to their educational journey. Through a well-rounded curriculum, the children learn and remember more. Thanks to highly skilled, nurturing adults, their language development soars. They are encouraged to express themselves, ask questions and engage in meaningful conversations. The learning environment sparks curiosity and wonder, inviting children to explore, discover and create. It is a place where their imaginations take flight, fostering a love of reading and igniting a passion for learning.

Leaders place a strong emphasis on including pupils in all aspects of school life. Pupils are proud of their contributions to school life, including writing interview questions for the recruitment of the new headteacher. Pupils are articulate about the job of the school council and explain their responsibility to contribute towards continually improving the school. Pupils learn about British values through personal, social, health and economic education and regularly engage in class votes about key decisions, for example on electing pupil leaders. They talk maturely about their roles and value kindness. Teachers model their expectations well, and pupils prove that they are active citizens. This is shown by their care for the school environment. Older pupils value the careers talks, which they consider aspirational.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils are calm and behave well throughout the school. They understand the importance of rules and understand the consequences if their behaviour falls below expectations. Staff and pupils have strong relationships, and pupils know that staff have pupils' best interests at the heart of all decisions.

Staff enjoy working here and value leaders' support. They, too, consider themselves part of a family and appreciate the support given to manage their workload. Staff value the way that leaders promote their well-being and appreciate that decisions made are in the best interests of the school. The governors know what the school does well and know what needs further improvement. The governors perform their statutory duties with rigour and enthusiasm.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained to recognise the potential risks that pupils face and to record any concerns promptly. Thorough record-keeping helps leaders to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Leaders liaise well with external agencies to keep pupils safe. Appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that the adults in school are safe to work with children.

Pupils are actively engaged in learning how to identify potential risks and keep themselves safe effectively, both in their everyday lives and when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have made considerable changes to what pupils learn across the curriculum. However, not all pupils have yet acquired the full, subject-specific vocabulary, knowledge and skills in all subjects as leaders intend. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers know how to implement the intended curriculum effectively and how to check how well pupils are learning the essential knowledge that leaders want them to.

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' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	118372
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10268825
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	127
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sam Buckman
Headteacher	Rebecca Heaton
Website	www.bethersden.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The new headteacher has been in the role for less than a term. The school has been supported by an interim executive headteacher during the transition between the previous and new headteacher.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact on the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the interim executive headteacher, the headteacher, other senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with members of the governing committee.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, art and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also listened to pupils reading.
- Inspectors considered the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements in the school by speaking with leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with members of the safeguarding team to examine their knowledge. During these meetings, the lead inspector scrutinised records and sampled case files to explore how the school identifies and supports pupils who are at risk of harm.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents provided by the school. These included the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, the pupil premium statement and minutes of the governing body's meetings.
- The views of parents and carers, staff and pupils were considered through Ofsted's online surveys and conversations during the inspection. Both inspectors spoke with small groups of parents at the school gate.

Inspection team

Michael Eggleton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Bateman	Ofsted Inspector

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