

# Inspection of Birchington Church of England Primary School

Park Lane, Birchington, Kent CT7 0AS

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Inspection dates: 25 and 26 February 2025

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Birchington is a happy, welcoming school. Pupils are happy here, feel safe and know that they have staff they can talk to if they have concerns. Strong, warm relationships pervade this setting. Parents value the 'compassion' of staff, and one described how their child is 'excited to go to school every day'. Pupils achieve well. They strive each day to meet the high expectations and traits modelled for them by staff.

Pupils conduct themselves especially well. In lessons, they are engaged and motivated to participate and learn. A flurry of hands fly up quickly to answer questions posed by teachers. Around the school site, pupils treat one another with respect. Bullying is rare, and most pupils trust that it will be dealt with well. For the small number of pupils who struggle to meet the school's high expectations for conduct, there is effective support to re-engage them positively.

Pupils understand the school's values of peace, hope, forgiveness, love and respect. They can talk about their importance in ensuring that their school community works well together. Pupils talk meaningfully about the inclusive ethos in their school. Here, everyone is welcome and what makes a person unique is celebrated.

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

The well-planned curriculum establishes effective foundations for learning from Reception Year onwards. This, alongside effective teaching, supports pupils in developing a range of knowledge and skills to achieve well. Staff subject knowledge is generally strong. Teachers make careful checks on what pupils have understood. In the strongest practice, possible misconceptions are pre-emptively taught to support pupils in avoiding potential pitfalls in understanding.

Lesson activities are mostly well designed to elicit the intended learning. At times, these are not as sharply connected to what pupils need to know as they could be. Where this happens, pupils do not gain the same developed understanding of key concepts as they do in other areas.

The school has the same high ambitions for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) as it does for their peers. Pupils' needs are identified quickly, and staff are given the information they need to support them in lessons. Additional adults are well trained and have the expertise required. While the provision to support pupils with SEND is mostly strong across the school, in some instances learning is not adapted well enough to meet the needs of some pupils. This means that, from time to time, not all pupils are able to access activities readily and struggle to complete tasks as effectively as they could.

There is a strong culture of reading in the school. Classrooms have inviting book corners, 'book cushions' are dotted throughout the school, a well-used library and reading sheds on the playground all support pupils in engaging in reading for pleasure and enjoyment.

These activities are highly purposeful and support pupils in developing not just their fluency and confidence, but also a genuine love of reading.

Knowledgeable staff deliver phonics very effectively. Pupils who struggle to read well are given effective support. As pupils move up through the school, reading lessons continue to deliver high-quality opportunities to practise the skills they need to understand texts and writers' choices.

In Reception, clear routines are established well from the start. These support children in developing and understanding the school's expectations for behaviour, which continue as they move up the school. Pupils generally attend well. However, some of the most vulnerable pupils miss too much of their schooling. While there has been some work to tackle this, this work has not yet had the impact it needs to.

An increasing range of clubs and visits capture pupils' interests and develop their understanding of the wider world. A range of leadership opportunities are on offer, including for the youngest members of the school. Becoming members of the school council, reading ambassadors, buddies for younger pupils and house captains are taken seriously by pupils. They make tangible contributions to improving their school on behalf of their peers. For example, safeguarding ambassadors recently secured outside speakers to enhance their understanding of rail and water safety.

Leaders have a sharp understanding of their school and its priorities. Despite changes in personnel, the momentum to continue to drive the school forward has not faltered. Rather, a strong sense of unified purpose is evident through each level of leadership and staff. The school puts in place effective systems to check that the steps they take have the purpose they intend. Governors hold leaders to account effectively. Staff's well-being is central to leaders' concerns. The school takes constructive actions to reduce unnecessary workload.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- At times, learning in lessons is not consistently adapted to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. This means that, in some instances, pupils with SEND cannot readily access their learning, or struggle to complete intended activities. The school needs to ensure that staff adapt explanations and learning activities effectively to support all pupils in achieving well.
- The school's strategies to improve the attendance of the most vulnerable pupils are not as effective as they need to be. This means that some pupils miss considerable parts of their education due to absences from school and do not achieve as well as they could.

The school needs to work with pupils and their families to identify and overcome the barriers to strong attendance to ensure that pupils attend and achieve as well as possible.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118693
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10341510
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	444
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Lorraine Bant
<b>Headteacher</b>	Louise Wilson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.birchington-primary.com">www.birchington-primary.com</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	24 and 25 September 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Canterbury. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in April 2017.
- There have been a number of changes to the leadership team of the school since the last inspection, including the headteacher. The headteacher has been in post full-time since January 2025.
- The school currently uses no 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.
- 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.
- The inspection team held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector met with the members of the governing body, including the chair. The lead inspector also held a meeting with a representative from the local authority and had a telephone call with a representative from the diocese.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history, geography and religious education. For each deep dive, 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. Inspectors also looked at examples of work and curriculum plans for art.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 and governing body minutes.
- The team spoke with pupils about their experience of the school. They took account of parents’ and carers’ and staff’s views through conversations and responses to Ofsted’s surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Marian Feeley, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Tash Hurtado

His Majesty’s Inspector

Jody Murphy

Ofsted Inspector

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