

The Baird Primary Academy

Parker Road, Hastings, East Sussex TN34 3TH

Inspection dates

16–17 January 2019

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Inadequate |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal leads the school with total commitment. She and other leaders have ensured that the school has improved rapidly since the last inspection.
- Most pupils are now making good or better progress. Some pupils are making accelerated progress to catch up, because the quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Pastoral care is a particular strength and the well-being of pupils is given the highest priority by all staff.
- Pupils are proud of their school. The school's physical environment and the range of resources available to pupils and staff have improved noticeably since the last inspection.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. Leaders have maintained breadth in the curriculum, despite pressures to improve outcomes in mathematics and English.
- Safeguarding is effective. Systems to protect pupils from harm are well developed. Staff are proactive when they have concerns about the welfare of pupils.
- Most pupils behave well. Pupils disapprove of disruptions to their learning. Incidents of poor behaviour have reduced dramatically over time.
- Although still below national averages, rates of attendance are improving rapidly, including for pupils from vulnerable groups.
- Those in positions of governance know the school well. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas to develop.
- Most parents are positive about the school and how leaders are improving it.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years because the quality of provision is good.
- Pupils do not make as much progress in mathematics as they do in reading and writing.
- Provision for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is improving. However, leaders know that these pupils need to make more rapid progress to catch up with other pupils.
- The proportion of pupils achieving a greater depth of learning is low compared to the national average for primary schools.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the progress pupils make in mathematics, so that outcomes in mathematics improve to match those in reading and writing.
- Increase the progress most-able pupils make, so that higher proportions of pupils achieve a greater depth of learning in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Accelerate the progress pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds make, so that their outcomes improve to match those of other pupils in the school and nationally.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal leads the school with dedication and determination. She has the backing and respect of staff. Together with the assistant principals, she is driving the school forward at an increasingly rapid pace.
- Senior leaders work together well as team. They are totally focused on improving every aspect of the school. They are not afraid to make tough decisions, especially when prioritising the key aspects of the school that need to be better.
- Leaders at all levels know the school well. Their self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate. Improvement planning focuses on the correct priorities.
- Middle leadership, including subject leadership, is still evolving. Nevertheless, middle leaders and those who aspire to leadership roles are hungry to take on more responsibility. This is partly to do with the professional development they benefit from, but mostly the positive and inspiring culture created by senior leaders.
- Additional government funding is spent wisely. This includes additional funding to promote physical education and sport. Leaders' focus on the quality of education for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds means these pupils are beginning to make better progress over time.
- The school's topic-based curriculum is fit-for-purpose and meets the needs of pupils well. Leaders have ensured that pupils experience an appropriate range of subjects linked to topics. Leaders understand the dangers of narrowing the curriculum when the pressure to achieve better outcomes in English and mathematics is high.
- The curriculum is enhanced by visits to the local community and further afield. Pupils enjoy a broad range of extra-curricular experiences, including in the arts and sport. One pupil was keen to tell the lead inspector about singing in a 'proper' theatre. Other pupils talked proudly of playing football and other team games against local schools.
- The wider curriculum is further enhanced by activities such as visits to the local fire station or themed assemblies. 'Special event' days which focus on equalities or remembrance, for instance, help prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Most pupils in Year 6 attend a residential trip which focuses on outdoor adventurous activities. Other educational visits include trips to the local coastline to study harbours and estuaries, or a local art gallery to work with an acclaimed children's writer.
- British values are promoted well. Pupils learn about tolerance of others' faiths and cultures, and democracy and the rule of law, as part of the day-to-day curriculum. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also promoted well by different aspects of the curriculum, including learning about equalities and the main faiths of the world.
- Parents are generally positive about the school. Most parents who spoke to inspectors said it has improved dramatically in the last two years. They are particularly happy with leaders' work to improve pupils' behaviour, although some expressed concerns about bullying.

Governance of the school

- Governance of the school is provided by the trust board, with delegated responsibilities given to the local board. The local board has recently undergone a number of changes in membership and a new chair has just been appointed.
- Those in positions of governance know the school well. This includes the newly appointed and experienced chair of the local board. School leaders benefit from good-quality guidance given by key staff from the multi-academy trust. The school's rapid progress is a direct result of the support and challenge given to leaders by the trust.
- The trust and local board carry out their statutory duties effectively. As a result, the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff are well provided for, and the quality of education is improving rapidly.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The culture to protect children is strong and underpins all aspects of school life. Staff know pupils well and are quick to act when they have concerns. Leaders are not afraid to challenge parents or escalate concerns when the need arises.
- Systems to report and follow up on concerns are well established. Record-keeping is meticulous. Key staff with additional safeguarding responsibilities are quick to challenge when they feel their concerns are not being addressed quickly enough.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and well cared for in school. Most parents who spoke to inspectors were positive about the care given to their children by staff. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's parent survey expressed positive views about their children feeling safe and happy at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Classrooms and corridors are active learning spaces where interactions between pupils and staff are purposeful and respectful. It is clear to see that great strides have been made to improve the learning culture since the last full inspection.
- Where teaching is strong, pupils respond well to the challenges presented to them by staff. Most teachers use questioning well to assess pupils' understanding and add further complexity to tasks when needed. Inspectors also witnessed teachers changing the focus of learning when pupils needed further support before moving on.
- Classroom visits gave inspectors first-hand experience of staff addressing the school's priorities for improvement. Teachers are increasingly effective at developing pupils' language and comprehension skills. Expectations of pupils' handwriting skills and the way they present their work are high. Pupils' increasing aspiration and hard work are recognised, celebrated and rewarded.
- The teaching of phonics is a strength. Teaching and support staff understand the importance of high-quality phonics teaching and how this impacts on developing pupils'

early reading skills. Improved outcomes in reading and writing at the end of key stage 1 are testament to this.

- Staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. Bespoke intervention ensures that pupils in this vulnerable group are successful learners. Support for pupils with speech and language difficulties is particularly strong. As a result, they engage in learning well and make good progress.
- The quality of teaching and learning is better in reading and writing than it is in mathematics. This is partly due to leaders' success in improving the quality of teaching in these areas. Staff have begun to work on addressing gaps that pupils have in their mathematical knowledge. However, more needs to be done to develop pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- Where teaching is less strong, teachers do not provide the correct level of challenge or support for pupils of different abilities. This is particularly true when expectations of most-able pupils are not as high as they should be. Where this is the case, the pace of learning slows, and progress is not as strong as it could be over time.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are growing in confidence as the quality of their education improves. This is particularly the case with older pupils, who are enjoying becoming successful learners once more.
- The impact of better teaching is improving pupils' attitudes to learning which, in turn, is impacting positively on the progress they make. This includes across the wider curriculum, where pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles is promoting their physical and emotional well-being well.
- Pupils understand how to keep safe on the internet. They appreciate the lessons they receive about the potential dangers when using social media.
- Pupils told inspectors they do not have problems with bullying, because staff deal with issues quickly. They also appreciate the role their own 'Phoenix' councillors play in resolving friendship problems. A small minority of parents who replied to Parent View are concerned about bullying, as was one parent who talked to the lead inspector.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are proud of their school and disapprove of poor behaviour. Pupils behave well in classrooms. They were polite to inspectors and to each other during breaktime and as they moved around the school.
- The school environment has improved significantly since the last full inspection. Pupils appreciate this and respect the buildings and resources they use. The playground and outdoor environment have also been developed, leading to better attitudes and greatly reduced incidences of poor behaviour from pupils.

- Leaders have made reducing levels of absence a key priority. Although still above the national average for primary schools, rates of absence, particularly persistent absence, are reducing rapidly. This includes the absence of pupils from vulnerable groups.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils make good or better progress across the curriculum. Current pupils are making much better progress than in the past. This is particularly the case in reading and writing.
- The school's phonics provision is good. Proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics assessments in Years 1 and 2 have risen over time and are now close to the national average.
- Pupils achieve increasingly well in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading and mathematics now matches the national average for primary schools.
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are also achieving better than in the past by the end of key stage 1. As a result, their outcomes are improving.
- Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 have improved dramatically over the last three years. Pupils' progress in reading and writing has moved from well below average to in line with most other primary schools. Progress in mathematics has also improved.
- The progress of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds broadly matches or is better than that of other pupils in the school in reading and writing by the end of key stage 2. Their progress in mathematics is less strong. Leaders know that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds need to make even better progress if their outcomes are to improve to match those of other pupils nationally.
- The proportion of pupils achieving a greater depth in their learning is below that seen in other primary schools. Leaders understand that, despite generally lower starting points, higher aspiration and expectation for most-able pupils should be a key priority as the school moves forward.

Early years provision

Good

- Children get off to a good start in the early years. As in other phases of the school, the quality of teaching and learning is improving rapidly, especially in Reception. As a consequence, greater proportions of children are achieving a good level of development by the time they move to Year 1.
- The early years is led well. Recent changes in leadership have been managed well, ensuring continuity and stability for children and staff alike. The early years team has also benefited from the support of specialist staff from the trust. Expectations are high. Staff aspire to even better outcomes for children as the quality of provision develops and improves.
- Relationships are strong. Staff have a wonderful rapport with the children, who respond well to adults' questioning and conversation. Parents who spoke to inspectors were very positive about the start their children have made at the school.

- Teachers have created a learning environment that is stimulating and appealing for children. Enticing role-play opportunities, such as a campfire in the bear cave, provide children with exciting opportunities to develop their imagination and communication skills.
- Topics based on books by familiar children's authors are popular. Activities linked to key books, such as nature walks looking for evidence of animals nibbling plants, stimulate children's sense of curiosity and bring learning to life.
- Staff constantly assess and monitor the progress children are making. Additional support is readily available for children who need it. Early reading interventions are delivered by knowledgeable staff. As a result, children of all abilities make good or better progress.
- Children behave well because expectations are high, and staff have established good routines. The safety and welfare of children are given the highest priority. Aspects such as risk assessments and appropriate first aid training for staff are up to date. This ensures that the early years is a safe and nurturing environment for children to learn in.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 140493 |
| Local authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 10046588 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 436 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair | Professor Chris Pole |
| Principal | Carly Welch |
| Telephone number | 01424 425670 |
| Website | www.thebairdprimaryacademy.org.uk/ |
| Email address | principal@thebairdprimaryacademy.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 18–19 January 2017 |

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school. The school is a sponsored academy and is part of the University of Brighton Academies Trust. The school has a local board which has delegated responsibilities from the trust for some aspects of governance.
- At the time of the last full inspection, the school was led by an executive principal, who had responsibility for two of the trust's schools. Recent changes in the school's leadership structure mean that the school is now led by the principal, supported by two assistant principals.
- The proportion of pupils who attract pupil premium funding is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Classrooms were visited on both days of the inspection. During classroom visits inspectors observed teaching and learning, assessed the quality of pupils' work, and talked to them about the progress that they were making. Some classroom visits were accompanied by senior leaders.
- As well as looking at pupils' work in classrooms, a separate sampling of their work in mathematics and English was undertaken with the English and mathematics subject leads. An inspector also heard pupils read.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed in classrooms and as they moved around the school. This included at the start of the school day and at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, the business manager, the safeguarding officer and a group of pupils.
- The lead inspector met with trust leaders and representatives of those responsible for governance, including the chief executive officer, and the chair of the local board.
- Inspectors talked to parents in the playground at the start of day one of the inspection. The lead inspector met with a parent on day two of the inspection. The lead inspector also talked to parents in a visit to a 'stay and play' session in the early years.
- Inspectors took into account the 64 responses to the Ofsted parent survey and accompanying free-text messages.
- A wide range of policies and records were scrutinised, including those regarding the safety of pupils. The school's self-evaluation, improvement planning and information about pupils' outcomes were considered. Minutes from a range of trust and local board meetings and notes of visits from the trust's challenge partner were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

Marcia Goodwin

Leah Goulding

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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