

Benfield Primary School

255 Old Shoreham Road, Portslade, Brighton and Hove BN41 1XS

Inspection dates

21–22 April 2016

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The effective leadership of the head of school, supported by the executive headteacher, has brought about significant improvements since the previous inspection. Consequently, teaching has improved and standards have risen.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good. Teachers provide well-structured and interesting lessons.
- Pupils' achievement is in line with the national average at the end of Year 6 and above the national average at the end of Year 2. Disadvantaged pupils achieve well and make good progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability get the extra help they need from teachers and support staff. These pupils make good progress.
- Pupils are proud of the school and take pride in their work. They are respectful of adults and each other. They move around the school well and feel safe.
- A well-planned curriculum provides exciting topics with equal opportunities for all.
- Parents are supportive of the school and leaders. They would unreservedly recommend the school to others.
- Governors are highly effective and know the school well. They hold leaders to account and provide support when needed.
- Provision in early years is improving rapidly and the children are making good progress from their starting points.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Middle Leaders do not always evaluate assessment information deeply enough in order to challenge effectively how well pupils are learning.
- Learning is not always adapted to meet the needs of the pupils or ensure that the most able are attaining a high enough standard.
- Levels of attendance, although rising, do not yet meet national expectations.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding and raise achievement further by:
 - adapting teaching to ensure that the needs of pupils are fully met, including appropriate challenge for the most able in all subjects
 - ensuring that middle leaders make greater use of pupil performance information to evaluate their impact on raising standards.
- Improve the attendance of pupils by working more closely with parents and pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The executive headteacher and head of school lead by example. They have created an ethos and culture within the school of ambition, care and equality for all. Leaders have the wholehearted support of staff, galvanising them to hold high aspirations. Everyone is clearly focused on the school's vision: 'To aim high and excel'.
- Leaders have implemented clear and rigorous expectations for teaching. These are evident in every classroom, demonstrating high levels of consistency. Consequently, pupils are clear about what they are learning and why. They like the routines and structure and feel that their learning is supported well. One pupil commented: 'If you get stuck it is good because you use everything you are given to see what to do next', a sentiment echoed by many children across the school.
- Leaders visit classrooms regularly and have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and know the children well. They provide oral and written feedback to teachers. Leaders have taken robust action to address previously weaker teaching while supporting those who need some additional help to improve their skills. This has led to a rapid improvement in the quality of teaching.
- The school's development plan is succinct, and detailed monitoring flows well into leaders' evaluation of the school. However, this is not leading to incisive enough action planning and reporting. This means that a focus on how well significant groups are learning is not embedded well enough.
- Senior leaders are very visible within the school and are continuously asking themselves: 'What more can we do to get standards higher?'. They work closely with an adviser, acting swiftly upon advice. Leaders demonstrate a secure understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- The well-organised and balanced curriculum is suitably enriched by a programme of extra-curricular clubs, activities and educational visits. These are carefully planned to ensure that all pupils can participate. There is a very well-run breakfast and after-school club for pupils which provides enrichment activities as well as care.
- Middle leaders' roles and responsibilities have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Middle leaders monitor the quality of teaching with senior leaders. They update governors on the developments in their areas of responsibility. Middle leaders are beginning to hold teachers to account for the progress their pupils make. This work is at an early stage and it is too soon to see the impact.
- Leaders have improved the school's system for tracking pupils' progress. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is closely and regularly monitored to identify those who are not doing as well as they should. These pupils are provided with timely and effective additional support to help them make better progress. This ensures that all pupils, including pupils who have special educational needs or disability and disadvantaged pupils, make good progress. For example, leaders have been effective in eliminating the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally at the end of Year 6 in 2015. In this way, the school demonstrates its commitment to providing equal opportunities to all and tackling any forms of discrimination.
- Parents feel that staff are approachable and they are very supportive of the head of school and her team. They feel that office staff are helpful and that everyone listens and takes actions when there are concerns.
- Leadership development is secure, and rigorous performance management ensures that development is appropriate to the school and individual. Staff understand that they are fully accountable for pupils' progress and that only the best teaching is financially rewarded.
- Sports funding is used effectively, and coaching of teachers has led to an enjoyment of teaching physical education (PE) and an improved quality of lessons. This was evident in a Year 3 PE lesson where pupils were fully engaged. They could identify strong links between activity and the effect upon their body.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively and is impacting upon standards. Equality of opportunity is fundamental to the school's values. Leaders take steps to ensure that all pupils have equal chances to succeed. This is shown in the thoughtful way in which the school spends the additional funding provided to support disadvantaged pupils. This gives disadvantaged pupils the same opportunities as others to develop confidence to succeed academically and personally.

- British values such as respect, tolerance and democracy are successfully promoted through the curriculum. Pupils understand the democratic process by taking part in elections to posts of responsibility. Acts of worship encourage pupils to reflect on the meaning of religious events and how these relate to the actions they take in their own lives. One assembly during the inspection focused on 'The Queen's birthday' and offered an opportunity for reflection about changes in Britain during the Queen's reign.
- Governors and senior leaders have an accurate understanding of what actions are required and know they need to make a difference rapidly.

The governance of the school

- Governors are very skilled and knowledgeable, and are highly ambitious for pupils. They know the school very well, including its strengths and areas for development. They keep themselves informed by carefully considering the information provided to them by senior leaders and middle leaders, and visit the school regularly to gain first-hand information from leaders.
- Governors have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress. They implement robust arrangements for setting targets for the executive headteacher and head of school and seek assurance that the management of teachers' performance is linked to pay progression. They ensure that good teaching is recognised and weaknesses are tackled.
- Governors are involved in the use of pupils' performance information. They have a data group and check with leaders how well pupils are learning, and how their performance compares with that of other schools nationally. They are knowledgeable about safeguarding issues, and make appropriate checks on safeguarding arrangements to ensure pupils are safe.
- Governors manage the finances effectively. They review the impact of the use of the government's additional funding, known as pupil premium, so that disadvantaged pupils make at least good progress. They ensure that the physical education and sports premium is used to improve pupils' health and well-being.
- Governors are highly committed to continuous school improvement and have ensured that the school has a good capacity to improve further.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders create a safe culture and staff receive regular training.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Teachers' secure subject knowledge is used to deliver interesting lessons that motivate pupils and make them want to learn. This is particularly the case in English and mathematics, where teachers successfully build on pupils' prior learning. They focus on developing the basic skills in these subjects.
- Expectations of pupils' learning are higher since the previous inspection. Pupils work hard during lessons and complete work that is set. They are developing pride in their work and respond well to the praise they receive for good work.
- Teaching of writing is improving. In Year 6, pupils were writing a scientific explanation based upon a character in a text that they were studying in class. Clear plans and approaches to the task supported the pupils' work. One child said, 'This is really helping us to understand the character in the book'. Teachers and other adults in this year group provide incisive and timely intervention to move the pupils' learning forward rapidly. The dialogue between adults and pupils is effective and moves pupils' learning on. Pupils' enjoyment of writing is evident and the challenge enabled them to reach a secure standard. In Year 1, pupils were writing instructions. They understood what makes their writing successful because of the clear instructions they were provided with. The teacher asked questions to develop their learning, but learning opportunities were missed when pupils were not challenged to respond to questions requiring deeper thinking. Not all pupils were engaged during the class discussion and opportunities were lost to improve their writing.
- Teaching of mathematics is improving and the mathematics leader has worked effectively with teachers to develop subject knowledge and skills. Evidence of progress and age-related expectations being met is visible in books and lessons. Mathematics in the majority of lessons is pitched to the appropriate age level and most pupils find this very achievable. The most able appear to be less motivated as lessons progress for they are not being challenged enough. In some classes, low expectations of work led to pupils not being fully engaged.

- Phonics teaching is developing rapidly and teachers are providing secure, well-planned lessons that meet the needs of the pupils. Progress is evident within the books, classrooms and reading. Pupils enjoy their phonics lessons and the routines support their learning. In Year 1, pupils were engaged and on task, and they showed good understanding of sounds. The most-able pupils completed work swiftly but missed opportunities for learning occurred as there was no additional challenge to extend their learning.
- Reading is a strength. Teachers promote reading for pleasure through discussing and celebrating well-known authors and ensuring that pupils read every day. Reading lessons focus on developing pupils' fluency. Discussion is used to develop understanding and comprehension of the text they are reading. There is good provision for pupils who struggle with reading or are falling behind. Pupils are encouraged to read widely at home and there is a rich variety of books to borrow.
- Teachers use assessment information effectively to plan further learning. Where incisive and timely intervention is seen and learning time is maximised, this moves pupils' learning forward rapidly. This is not yet consistent across the school and learning opportunities for the most able are not always provided. Work in books reflects the school's marking policy, which is consistently applied across the school. Intervention programmes are having an impact on progress in English and mathematics. Where questioning is used skilfully to tackle pupils' misconceptions, this leads to swift progress within the classroom.
- Curriculum topics are enjoyed by the pupils and they have strong literacy links. Teachers provide rich experiences for pupils that stimulate their imaginations and inspire them to work hard. Topics such as 'Superheroes', 'Brighton Rocks' and 'Dragon's Den' motivate all pupils and encourage them to write. Consequently, school assessment data shows that all groups achieve equally well in reading and writing. A pupil in Year 4 was really motivated and inspired by the work on dragons; he created a long poem which commenced: 'The blood red eyes hiding in the moonlight. Wind pushing like a hurricane of ice'. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development and fundamental British values are woven through the curriculum, for example within a topic 'Refugees' in Year 5.
- Additional adults in classrooms provide focused support for pupils who have special educational needs or disability, and as a result, these pupils progress as well as their classmates. Teaching assistants liaise with teachers by providing feedback on how well the supported pupils are doing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Adults work hard to provide a caring and cohesive environment for the pupils. Part of the Benfield vision is 'To ensure that the children are at the centre of all we do'. This was evident across the school.
- Pupils are proud of the school and take pride in their work. Displays across the school are bright and attractive and help to promote self-esteem and a love of learning.
- Pupils are polite and respectful and feel valued within the school. They are articulate and confident learners and conduct themselves well around the school.
- A safe environment is provided for the pupils and enables them to feel safe. The pupils could name whom they would go to if they had any concerns. They are clear about online safety and how to keep themselves safe.
- An orderly and structured environment allows everything to flow well throughout the school day with the pupils feeling calm and secure. The pupils like the structure and routines and know what is expected of them. They understand and like the clear rules and consequences that are in place consistently across the school.
- Different forms of bullying are recognised by pupils but they say there are no such incidents in school. If bullying were to occur, they all know that it would be dealt with quickly by staff. Pupils trust staff.
- Parents like the ethos of the school. One parent commented, 'The school has provided my child with a safe and nurturing environment'. Parents overwhelmingly felt that their children are well looked after.
- The school has an open culture that actively promotes the engagement of parents, who are able to share concerns and feel that issues will be addressed.
- Pupils have clear moral obligations, including raising money for charities.

- Attendance is improving and much is being done by the school, in partnership with the city council, to ensure that attendance is raised even higher.
- Pupils see no evidence of bullying and the significant majority of parents feel the same. The inspectors saw no evidence of unkindness or bullying during the inspection.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are thoughtful, courteous and polite. They are keen to engage with adults to talk about their learning. There is a culture of respect, and pupils show great care for the school environment and keep it tidy.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school. They are eager to learn, and the majority behave in lessons. Where work is well matched to their learning needs, there is no disruption to learning. Occasionally, however, work is not well matched and some pupils lose concentration, either because they are not sure about their learning or because they are not challenged enough.
- On the rare occasions that pupils present a challenge, there are procedures in place to support them effectively and to communicate well with parents. Pupils all felt that behaviour was good in the school, although they recognised that there were some pupils who did not behave well. They all felt that behaviour was dealt with fairly.
- The consistent implementation of the school's behaviour policy ensures that the behaviour systems, including rewards and sanctions, are effective. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour; this is reflected in the very few cases of poor behaviour evidenced within the school.
- The overwhelming majority of parents feel that the school makes sure that its pupils are well behaved.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Leaders have tackled underachievement effectively and this has led to results at the end of Year 6 being in line with national expectations and at the end of Year 2 exceeding national expectations. Progress is in line with national averages.
- Pupils in the school are working hard and the majority of pupils are making good progress from their starting points. The legacy of pupils' underachievement is being successfully eliminated. Throughout the school, accurate assessments of pupils' achievements, combined with the work seen in their books, show a continuing positive trend of improvement in reading, writing and mathematics. Some examples of accelerated progress were observed through clear, targeted interventions and support for English and mathematics.
- Children in early years are beginning to make good progress and the work seen in their learning journals would suggest that they are on track to meet national expectations at the end of the Reception Year.
- The school has implemented a systematic approach to phonics to improve on the results from last year. Predictions for the end of Year 1 and end of Year 2 are that pupils will attain at least national expectations.
- Disadvantaged pupils, boys and pupils who have special educational needs or disability are predicted to be close to or slightly above the national average by the end of the year, and the work in their books would support this.
- Pupils' reading is fluent and comprehension is appropriate to their age, with books matched well to their ability. Pupils have interesting texts to read.
- The most-able pupils do not always make as much progress as they should in mathematics and English. This is because they are not moved on to harder work at an early stage, and also because they are sometimes provided with work that they can already do.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress due to the focus on closing the gap with targeted extra help provided either by specialist support, a monitoring group or by teaching assistants in class. These other adults work alongside pupils and break learning down into manageable steps so that pupils can complete their work successfully.

Early years provision

is good

- The new early years leader has a 'no excuses, high expectations' belief that all children, regardless of low starting points, should make good progress. She has a rigorous and detailed action plan focused upon high-quality teaching and rich learning experiences. She monitors the phase scrupulously and plans provision meticulously based upon children's needs and interests. Children are making good progress in the early years because effective leadership ensures that teaching and provision meet children's needs across all areas of learning.
- Teachers know the children well and provide clear, well-structured tasks that stimulate children and inspire them to learn. The adults in the setting observe children carefully and record children's achievements in their learning journals. Parents contribute to the assessment of their child and the journals provide a clear, detailed and accurate record of the child's progress.
- Tasks during free-flow time provide opportunities for independent learning. The children are able to select from a variety of learning tasks that are linked to their current topic, 'The Farm'. The range of activities is purposeful, well thought out and provides opportunities for developing English and mathematical skills.
- Adults encourage children to talk and ask the children challenging questions where appropriate. For example, one child making a sheep said, 'They have snuggly fur to keep them warm, they live on farms and eat grass and special sheep food. I fed one, it was tickly, it was nibbling too quickly'. The teacher challenged the word 'fur' as opposed to 'wool' and asked the child why it was nibbling quickly. The child reflected, then responded, 'probably because it was hungry'.
- Staff plan and prepare a range of activities throughout the day for both indoor and outdoor learning. There is a good balance of activities of those that children select for themselves and those that are led by adults.
- Children have mastered sounds and fluently blend them together to make words. They read simple sentences and are beginning to use basic punctuation. They make a good start in learning to read because the teaching of phonics is effective.
- Communication and language skills are plain to see during independent work. Children find it harder to talk openly in a large group and start to lose focus and concentration.
- Children are able to remain focused upon their independent learning. One child who spent a long time making a cake for the Queen outlined what she was going to wear and how she was going to get it to the Queen's house. She then thoughtfully said, 'I'm going to buy a reading diary for the Queen, I don't expect she has got one'. Another group playing vets were recording bills, details of operations and writing prescriptions.
- Safeguarding is effective and all adults know the children well. All procedures to protect the children from harm are robust. Risk assessments have been carefully considered and equipment is used sensibly. Children know how they can help keep themselves and others safe.
- Assessments of children upon entry are robust and continue throughout the year using a range of practices, including parental involvement.
- Children behave well towards each other and are kind and helpful. They feel safe at school and they enjoy playing with the older children at lunchtimes.

School details

Unique reference number	114412
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10002400

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	285
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Barnard-Langston JP
Headteacher	Mrs Emma Lake (executive headteacher), Mrs Helen Horsley (head of school)
Telephone number	01273 294950
Website	www.benfield.brighton-hove.dbprimary.com
Email address	head@benfield.brighton-hove.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 December 2013

Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized primary school.
- There have been no changes to leadership since the previous inspection.
- Pupils are taught in single-year age classes. These are set for some subjects.
- There is a breakfast club and an after-school club run by the governing body.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority) is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is broadly in line with the national average.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The executive headteacher is a local leader of education and supports other schools in the locality.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 24 lessons and were accompanied by senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher and head of school, other leaders within the school, two governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views through talking to pupils around the school and in lessons. Pupils' views were also gleaned from some pupils who escorted inspectors around the school to look at the curriculum, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school at the beginning of the day and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work across the school in a range of subjects to look at current achievement. Inspectors listened to a sample of pupils read in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation including that relating to health and safety, safeguarding, equality, behaviour, anti-bullying, attendance, school self-evaluation, school action planning, reports on the quality of teaching, curriculum information, pupil premium, sports funding and assessment information.
- Inspectors took note of displays around the school and the work in outdoor areas.
- Inspectors spoke to a small number of parents during the inspection and took into account the 37 responses to Parent View.
- Inspectors took into account the 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Llyn Codling, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Jacobs	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Garratt	Ofsted Inspector

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