

Benwick Primary School

High Street, Benwick, March, Cambridgeshire PE15 0XA

Inspection dates

18–19 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, pupils' achievement has declined. Challenges with staffing have resulted in improvements being too slow and inconsistent. Consequently, pupils' progress and attainment are not good.
- The quality of teaching and learning varies too much throughout the school. This affects many pupils' progress, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and the most able pupils.
- Governors do not challenge leaders rigorously to check that leaders' actions are having sufficient impact.
- Middle leadership is at an early stage of development. These leaders do not have the necessary strategic oversight of their area of responsibility to contribute effectively to the school's improvement.
- Some pupils' poor behaviour too often disrupts the learning and efforts of others.
- Leaders do not know enough about the impact of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Leaders' evaluation lacks precision and rigour.
- Leaders are rethinking the school's curriculum. Currently, pupils do not receive routine opportunities in the wider curriculum to be able apply their basic skills, especially writing.
- Teachers are not using assessment information precisely enough to plan appropriate learning for the different needs and abilities of pupils.
- Children in the early years get off to a happy, positive start to school life. However, adults do not use assessment information well enough to support children to make good progress in their learning from their starting points.
- Despite leaders' efforts, there is a core of parents and carers who do not have confidence in the school's leadership and who are dissatisfied with teaching, learning and the curriculum.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and knows what needs to be done to improve.
- Leaders, including governors, and staff are diligent in their approach to safeguarding. The culture of safeguarding is strong.
- The teaching of phonics is improving and is effective throughout the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - continuing to develop the skills of middle leaders so that they can contribute to school improvement more strategically and effectively
 - developing the expertise of governors to ensure that they are able to hold leaders to account rigorously
 - precisely evaluating the effectiveness of the actions taken to raise standards for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, including the use of additional funding
 - further developing relationships with parents so that they value the school's work and play a positive role in raising standards.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and more attain expected standards at the end of each key stage by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment information precisely to plan teaching to meet pupils' needs, especially pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils and most-able pupils, and ensure that they achieve the standards of which they are capable
 - gaps in pupils' knowledge caused by inconsistencies in the quality of teaching are dealt with swiftly, particularly in key stage 2
 - pupils are provided with more opportunities to use their basic skills, especially writing, throughout the wider curriculum.
- Ensure that low-level disruption is eradicated and pupils develop good attitudes to learning so that they try their best in all their work.
- Continue to develop the provision in the early years so that adults use assessment more incisively to ensure that activities meet children's needs, enabling them to make the best possible progress from their starting points.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Over time, high and frequent levels of staff change have slowed the pace of improvement. Despite their efforts, the headteacher and governors have struggled with the challenges and have been unable to secure a consistently high quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have declined.
- The headteacher has an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision. Aply supported by the assistant headteacher, the headteacher has provided consistency in approaches to teaching and learning in an attempt to counteract the staffing turbulence. This is ensuring that the fundamentals of effective teaching are in place. However, as staffing has only recently become more settled, the full impact of the work is not known. Staff are positive about the school and want to do their best for pupils.
- The English and mathematics leaders are relatively new to their posts and it is too soon to see any sustained impact of their actions on pupils' learning or outcomes. Recent local authority support and training are enabling these leaders to improve their skills and share their expertise.
- Middle leadership is not yet fully developed. Middle leaders are keen and eager to learn but currently lack strategic oversight and do not have a full enough understanding of how to precisely target areas for improvement without support.
- Pupil premium funding is not evaluated well enough. The impact of actions to support disadvantaged pupils is not carefully and rigorously checked. Plans do not clearly show the intended impact that the spending will have on accelerating the progress of the group of pupils it is meant for. This makes it difficult for leaders and governors to judge precisely whether the additional funding is making a positive difference.
- Over time, the impact of funding to support pupils with SEND has not been evaluated well enough. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has implemented more rigour in the systems and processes in place for pupils with SEND. This is securing greater precision in the identification of pupils and, therefore, the effective planning of additional support.
- Leaders' extensive work to increase parents' involvement with the school has had varying success. Many events are well attended by parents and valued, for example the recent 'bring mum' and 'bring dad' to school days and the school sports afternoon. However, responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and text message service were very mixed, with a significant majority of parents indicating dissatisfaction and a lack of confidence in leaders' work.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium is used effectively to provide a broad range of additional sporting opportunities for pupils to access. This is increasing pupils' enjoyment and participation in sporting events, such as sports day, and improving the quality of teaching in PE.
- Leaders are currently reviewing their chosen topic-based curriculum to encourage more pupil interest and engagement. The curriculum is broad and enriched by a wide range

of experiences, including educational visits. However, pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to apply their basic skills across subjects. For example, there is a notable absence of opportunities to write in subjects such as history and geography.

- Thought-provoking assemblies help pupils to deepen their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Pupils learn about British values through frequent discussion and their involvement in aspects of the school, such as the school council.
- Recent external support through the local authority has been effective in helping the headteacher, governors and middle leaders to identify weaknesses and bring about some improvements.

Governance of the school

- Governors are keen to improve the effectiveness of governance. They have recently undertaken a full governance review to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be strengthened. It is too early to see any impact of actions taken as a result of this review.
- Governors have not held leaders sufficiently to account for ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' outcomes are consistently good. This has contributed to a decline in standards.
- Governors are not monitoring the impact of leaders' work with sufficient rigour. Minutes of the governing body's meetings show that, while they ask questions of school leaders, governors do not challenge leaders precisely enough about the outcomes for pupils.
- Similarly, governors are not rigorous enough when monitoring and evaluating the impact of additional funding on pupils' outcomes, including the spending of pupil premium and funding for pupils with SEND. This results in governors not specifically knowing the positive difference additional funding is having on improving pupils' achievement.
- Governors are vigilant in maintaining oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements. They have been suitably trained and understand their responsibilities in ensuring the welfare and safety of every pupil. They regularly review the school's policies and procedures in this regard.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders continue to prioritise the safeguarding and well-being of pupils. Leaders work closely with the local authority so they are confident they are up to date with all the legal requirements. Consequently, leaders' checks on the suitability of staff, volunteers and visitors to work with children are thorough and appropriate measures are taken to respond to any concerns about pupils' welfare and safety.
- All safeguarding systems are understood and carried out diligently by staff. Records are detailed, clear and up to date. The designated safeguarding leaders act swiftly and maintain effective monitoring to ensure that pupils are well looked after.

- Pupils say that they feel safe at school. They know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. Through the curriculum, pupils are made aware of the risks of using the internet and social media. They feel confident approaching adults at school if they have a concern and say that they know it will be taken seriously and dealt with quickly.
- Parental views on safeguarding are mixed. While there were parents who confirm they believe their children are safe at school, a significant proportion of parents who responded to Parent View did not agree. This contradicts the school's parental surveys carried out in January 2019, in which the majority of parents reported that they felt their children were safe at school.
- During the inspection, the inspector allocated additional time to seek parental views, take them into consideration and review any concerns. Evidence confirms that leaders, including governors, and all adults carry out their safeguarding duties effectively and safeguard pupils well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Leaders rightly make improving the quality of teaching a central focus of their work. Following well-planned actions, the quality of teaching is beginning to improve. For example, the reorganisation of pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 is enabling teachers to provide more intensive support to improve pupils' learning.
- Leaders have implemented a number of changes this school year to ensure consistency of approach throughout the school. While teachers are keen to follow, and are following, the school's agreed methods and approaches to teaching mathematics and writing, it is taking time for all teachers to apply these methods to meet the needs of pupils confidently.
- Disadvantaged pupils receive individualised support for their academic and their personal, social and emotional needs. Evidence in pupils' books shows that some disadvantaged pupils make good progress but this is inconsistent across the school.
- Teaching assistants' support to improve pupils' learning is variable in its quality. On occasions, additional adults supervise activities rather than promoting pupils' learning effectively. As a result, some pupils who need to move on quickly to catch up make slower progress as teaching assistants provide only basic guidance to them.
- The quality of support for pupils with SEND also varies in its effectiveness. This is because teachers do not use assessment precisely enough to ensure that the deployment of support and learning activities meet pupils' needs so that they make good progress.
- Teachers plan sequences of writing lessons which successfully develop and build upon pupils' grammar and punctuation skills and provide wider opportunities for pupils to apply these skills to different types of writing. However, pupils are not being given enough opportunities to use, and consequently develop, their writing skills in other subjects, such as science, history and geography.
- Pupils are being given more frequent opportunities in mathematics to develop fluency, reasoning and problem-solving skills. While this is supporting pupils to practise and extend their knowledge and understanding, and thereby improve their mathematics

skills, teachers are not consistently giving pupils the freedom to investigate, 'find out' and apply what they know for themselves. This is limiting the progress pupils make.

- Phonics teaching has improved in all year groups and pupils are using their knowledge well to help them to read and spell. Leaders have chosen to adopt a consistent whole-school approach in which teachers are well trained and are confident in their teaching of phonics.
- Heightening the profile of reading has been a focus and this is starting to become more evident in key stage 2. Reading is a more regular occurrence, with an emphasis on comprehension and the enjoyment of reading high-quality books. The school library is a popular well-resourced area that is being used more consistently. Year 6 pupils talked with enthusiasm about their reading and were able to be specific about their preferences. For example, one pupil talked knowledgeably about her 'love of historical fiction', giving 'Oliver Twist' as an example of one of her favourite reads.
- All classrooms and outdoor areas support pupils' learning well. Teachers celebrate and promote achievement through a high level of encouragement and stimulus to initiate pupils' interest in their learning. Pupils routinely use the prompts and reminders displayed in classrooms to help them with their learning, such as topic displays with vocabulary pupils may want to use and questions to initiate interest and thinking.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- As a result of inconsistencies in teaching, pupils' attitudes to learning are variable. When teaching is strong, pupils concentrate, are enthusiastic and show high levels of interest in their learning. For example, Year 6 pupils were brimming with excitement when sharing their 'business' plans they are working on to present to Year 5 pupils. The effort, presentation and quality of content exceeded that seen in some of their day-to-day exercise books.
- While pupils say they feel well looked after in class and they have the opportunity to learn, there were mixed responses from pupils regarding behaviour during learning time. Pupils demonstrate empathy towards their peers who exhibit more challenging behaviour but, equally, become frustrated when the teacher has to stop teaching to manage the behaviour of others.
- Leaders take pupils' views seriously. Members of the school council are democratically elected and pupil voice is used frequently to find out what pupils think. Pupils enjoy contributing towards improving their school. While walking around with the inspector, pupils shared their pride in their school environment and explained how the school has changed for the better over recent years.

Behaviour

- Instability and disruption in their schooling have had a negative impact on pupils' behaviour. Although there have been changes to the behaviour system, which pupils

say they like, low-level disruption continues to distract pupils from their learning and this, in turn, slows the progress some pupils make.

- Some pupils listen attentively, remain focused on their work and try hard. However, there are others who do not follow instructions as a matter of course and require constant prompting to do so. This causes some disruption in lessons and, consequently, has a negative impact on the learning of others.
- Most of the time, pupils' conduct around the school is calm and orderly. At lunchtime, pupils are sociable and chat to each other. At breaktimes, pupils benefit from a range of activities and generally play together harmoniously. Where there are any incidents, records show that they are followed up and the school's chosen behaviour 'steps' applied consistently.
- Where there are a few pupils with more challenging behaviour, staff have established positive relationships with these pupils and usually manage their behaviour well. Any exclusions have been carried out as a last resort and appropriate systems have been adhered to.
- Leaders have worked over time to improve pupils' attendance and reduce the proportion of pupils who regularly miss school. They follow up absences and work closely with families to help them to understand the value of their children being in school every day. Regular attendance is celebrated, for example through the attendance award in assembly. Attendance rates are improving but they are still below average.
- A significant number of parents do not feel the school deals effectively with behaviour and bullying. All school records demonstrate that leaders take parents' concerns seriously, monitor behaviour carefully and respond appropriately.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over time, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have led to slow progress for pupils in all year groups. The subsequent decline in outcomes for some pupils throughout the school since the previous inspection means that pupils have not been fully equipped for the next stage of their education.
- In 2018, the proportions of Year 2 pupils attaining the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics were above the national averages but below average at greater depth. For current Year 2 pupils, leaders' assessment information and work in pupils' books show further improvements.
- In 2018, the proportions of Year 6 pupils who reached the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics were below the national averages. Equally, the proportions of pupils at key stage 2 who reached the higher standards in reading and mathematics, and greater depth in writing, were below the national averages.
- Progress and attainment are improving in the early years and key stage 1 through better teaching. Although key stage 2 has been slower to improve, current pupils are now beginning to make better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Year 6 pupils are better prepared for transfer to secondary school than previously.

- The effective teaching of phonics has led to an increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the standard required in the Year 1 phonics screening check. In 2018, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics was similar to the national average. Pupils are developing their early reading skills well.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils, like other pupils in the school, is variable. Consequently, by the end of Year 6, the differences between disadvantaged pupils' attainment and that of other pupils nationally are not substantially diminishing.
- Progress for pupils with SEND is inconsistent. When pupils are supported effectively and given appropriate work accurately suited to their needs, they achieve well. At other times, tasks and support are not so precisely targeted so pupils do not learn as well as they should.
- The most able pupils have not made sufficient progress previously to ensure that they achieve as well as they should in reading, writing and mathematics, given their capabilities. They are currently making better progress but not consistently across all subjects.
- Outcomes are weak in some subjects in the wider curriculum, such as history and geography, particularly in relation to pupils' written work.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- As in the rest of the school, there has been instability in the staffing in early years, resulting in inconsistent practice. Nonetheless, leadership demonstrates secure knowledge and understanding of what constitutes good early years teaching and other provision. Improvements are evident in teaching and learning.
- Children enter the early years with skills and knowledge which are mostly typical for their age. Over time, the proportion of children who leave Reception having reached a good level of development has been below average and so they have not been prepared well enough for learning in Year 1.
- Leaders have successfully submitted bids for the additional 'opportunity area' funding. This is being used to improve transition between pre-school settings and Reception, particularly in developing children's communication and language. The additional funding is also contributing towards improvements in reading and SEND provision.
- Teachers and other adults are not consistently precise in their assessments of children's learning. Consequently, some of the tasks planned do not meet the children's needs well enough, especially in providing challenge and stretch for the most able children. When this happens, children do not persevere with a task and become quickly distracted, which slows their learning.
- The indoor and outdoor environments potentially provide a wide range of independent and directed activities to enable children to develop and practise their skills, knowledge and understanding, but lack of accuracy in assessment means that they do not consistently meet children's needs and abilities.
- Children are confident in their environment. They demonstrate that they are ready to learn and show signs of wanting to do more. Children enthusiastically talked to the inspector and were inquisitive and eager to carry out tasks.

- The teaching of early reading skills is improving. Children confidently use their growing phonics knowledge to work out how to read and write unfamiliar or new words.
- Children form positive relationships with one another and they play together well. They are supportive of others and collaborate well to complete the tasks that they are working on.
- Parents of Reception children were positive about the start their children receive at Benwick. As one parent, summarising other Reception parents' views, said:

'From day one, my child has absolutely loved school life. Children are eager to learn and the staff team is wonderful at ensuring that the children are given the opportunity to explore, discover and play in the most exciting ways. Staff know children well and ensure that children are cared for every day.'
- Staff are fully trained in all aspects of keeping children safe and welfare requirements are met. Adults provide a caring, nurturing environment, ensuring that children are safe and enjoy their early school experience.

School details

Unique reference number	110627
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10045765

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

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	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Darren Gore
Headteacher	Mrs Jackie North
Telephone number	01354 677 266
Website	www.benwickprimaryschool.co.uk/
Email address	office@benwick.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 March 2014

Information about this school

- Benwick Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- There have been a number of staff changes since the previous inspection. The headteacher is leaving on 31 December 2019. Governors, with the support of the local authority, are undertaking a full recruitment process to secure a replacement.
- On 16 December 2016, a one-day inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 was undertaken that found safeguarding to be effective.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is higher than the national average and in the top 20% of all schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average and also in the top 20% of all schools nationally.

- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector met with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, who is also the SENCo, the early years leader and the English and mathematics leaders.
- There was a meeting between the lead inspector and the chair of the governing body. In addition, the inspector held two meetings with governors.
- The inspector met with the local authority primary adviser and spoke on the telephone to the school's link local authority adviser.
- The inspector observed lessons throughout the school on day one jointly with the headteacher and on day two with a group of pupils. The inspector reviewed a wide range of pupils' work in books in all subject areas and in the early years.
- The inspector heard pupils read and attended a whole-school assembly.
- The inspector took account of the 24 responses received from Ofsted's online pupil survey and also spoke to many pupils during lessons and at break and lunchtime to gather their views.
- Responses from parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and free-text responses from parents were analysed, along with the school's recent parental surveys that have been undertaken and their written comments following school events. The inspector spoke to parents attending sports day, met with one parent and took note of the school's records of parental communications.
- The inspector considered 12 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and spoke to teachers and support staff.
- The inspector took into account a wide range of information, including the school's website, development plan, information from the school's assessment system, governing body minutes and leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning.
- A thorough review of documentation relating to safeguarding, including the local authority's recent safeguarding audit, behaviour and incident logs and checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils, was carried out.

Inspection team

Tracy Fielding, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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