Inspection of Bligh Primary School (Juniors)

Bligh Way, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 2XJ

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 June 2023

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Bligh Juniors is a welcoming, friendly and caring school. Pupils agree that 'it is a school with HEART', as one pupil put it, which represents the school's values of honesty, empathy, achievement, resilience and teamwork. These values are threaded through all of the school's work and are clear to see in the way pupils approach their learning and treat each other. Pupils are proud of their achievements and those of others.

Pupils are happy, respectful, enjoy learning and feel safe in school. Pupils know that teachers expect them to do their very best in their personal, social and academic achievements. They meet leaders' expectations to be 'secondary ready' by the time they leave. Relationships between adults and pupils are a strength. A group of pupils accurately summed up their school as being, 'A fun school where you make good friends, and a school that encourages us to be good people.'

Pupils behave well. They know and understand the expectations for their behaviour in lessons and in the playground. Pupils feel safe because they know that adults have time for them and listen to any concerns. Pupils have a 'safe adult' they know they can talk to. Any bullying is dealt with swiftly and fairly.

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

Leaders aim to provide an interesting and ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It is clearly planned and sequenced. The provision for pupils with SEND is strong. Leaders identify these pupils' individual needs accurately. Teachers check on all pupils' learning in a range of ways to inform their teaching and make adjustments to meet pupils' needs.

Leaders are continuing to refine the curriculum. In a few subjects, there is a lack of precision about the important knowledge that pupils need to learn and remember. As a result, there are occasional inconsistencies in teachers' understanding and delivery of the curriculum. Leaders recognise this and are clear about their plans to increase subject-specific training, guidance and support for staff.

Reading is a high priority. Most pupils become confident and fluent readers, developing the skills to access the wider curriculum. The relatively recent reading curriculum is appropriately structured. It is delivered consistently well and ensures that pupils increase their skills as they move through the school. Staff promote reading for enjoyment exceptionally well, and as a result, pupils develop a love of reading. They read a broad range of good-quality texts, which are increasingly demanding and challenging. Leaders have rightly put in place a phonics programme to support pupils still at an early stage of reading. Readers who are struggling get effective additional support to help them catch up quickly.

Staff share high and consistent expectations for pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Most pupils are well behaved and conduct themselves in a calm, orderly manner. They have good attitudes to learning and follow the 'Ready, Respect, Safe' ethos that prevails in the school. Routines around the school are well established and increasingly followed as pupils move through the year groups. Pupils learn without interruption. Teachers quickly refocus any pupils who lose concentration.

Leaders are unwavering in their work to develop pupils' character and personal skills. This stands pupils in good stead for the next stage of their education and later life. Parents appreciate this culture, with one saying, '[The school is] adept at picking up on wider personal development issues such as resilience and confidence, and effectively supports children to develop these skills.' Pupils learn to be understanding and accepting of others with different beliefs, backgrounds, cultures or ways of learning. Pupils learn about leadership and helping others, proudly taking on roles such as librarians, peer mediators and members of the pupil parliament. They benefit from a range of clubs and trips.

There is a strong sense of teamwork among staff. All staff, including those at the start of their careers, feel valued and supported. They appreciate the consideration leaders show for their workload and well-being. Trust leaders and local academy councillors know the school well. They work closely with school leaders to continue to improve the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a robust culture of safeguarding in this school. A strong safeguarding team is led by a highly skilled and experienced designated safeguarding leader. Staff receive regular training and are quick to recognise signs that a pupil might be at risk of harm. Staff are vigilant and report any concerns. Leaders take swift and appropriate action in response. They are tenacious in their work to ensure that pupils get the right help at the right time, including from external agencies when needed. Record-keeping and recruitment checks are robust. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, the key knowledge that pupils need to learn is not always precisely defined. As a result, there is some inconsistency in teachers' understanding and implementation of the curriculum in these subjects. This means that pupils do not always achieve as well as they might in these areas. Leaders should ensure that teachers are trained effectively in order to understand and focus on the important key knowledge that pupils need to learn so that they remember more and achieve highly.

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	144566
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10240624
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	295
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tiffany Beck
Headteacher	Christian Markham
Website	www.blighprimaryschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	23 and 24 November 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Bligh Primary School (Juniors) is part of a multi-academy trust called Maritime Academy Trust.
- The school is paired with Bligh Primary School (Infants) on the same site. Both schools share a senior leadership team, support staff, administrative staff and the local academy council.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy and assistant headteachers, other leaders and staff.

- Inspectors met with members of the board of trustees and members of the local academy council.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history, religious education and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with 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 spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects and observed some pupils reading to teaching assistants.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke with leaders, staff and pupils. They looked at the single central record, recruitment checks and safeguarding records. Throughout the inspection, inspectors considered and checked the culture of safeguarding within the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school development plan and the school's evaluation of its effectiveness.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school during playtimes and lunchtimes and in assemblies. They talked to pupils, formally and informally, about their learning, what behaviour is like and whether they feel safe at school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and parents and spoke to some parents at the beginning of the school day.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
James Freeston	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Appleby	Ofsted Inspector

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