Inspection of Bligh Primary School (Infants)

Bligh Way, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 2XJ

Inspection dates:	4 and 5 March 2025
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Outstanding**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Early years provision	**Outstanding**
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Christian Markham. This school is part of the Maritime Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Nicky Osborne, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tiffany Beck.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Bligh Primary School (Infants) under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Bligh Infant School to be outstanding for overall effectiveness, before it opened as an academy. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Bligh Primary School (Infants) is a place of safety, celebration and opportunity for pupils and their families. From the moment children join the school in the early years, their needs are carefully considered and accommodated. Strong relationships are built with parents and carers so everyone works together to provide the very best start for pupils here. Parents rightly value this. One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'The school does so much for us and helps us teach our children too. It feels like family.' This united approach and shared understanding ensures that even the youngest children flourish, grow in confidence and are well prepared for the next stages of their education.

Expectations are high throughout the school. Pupils know that it is important to behave well and work hard. Mostly pupils do this and attain well, particularly in English and mathematics. Pupils enjoy their learning and try their best to be 'Ready, Respectful and Safe' in line with the school behaviour charter. The school is a calm, happy and orderly environment. Pupils get along well together. Relationships are warm and good-humoured. Pupils trust staff to help them resolve any worries or problems.

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

The school has ensured that an ambitious and well-ordered curriculum is in place. This starts when children join the school in early years. It clearly identifies the key knowledge that pupils need to learn. Staff have benefited from high-quality training that has developed their subject knowledge as well as a shared teaching approach. This helps to ensure that the curriculum is delivered consistently well across the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs quickly and accurately identified. Learning is carefully adapted where necessary to ensure that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum and experience success.

In early years, careful and regular checks on what children know and remember help build an accurate picture of their next steps. Across the rest of the school, in English and mathematics teachers quickly identify and address any misconceptions and build on pupils' prior knowledge well. In other subjects, the school does not always have such a clear picture of what knowledge has been understood and retained. This makes it harder for teachers to build on pupils' learning as successfully.

Communication and language are carefully developed in the early years. Important vocabulary is identified. Staff use these key words and phrases in a variety of ways across the setting, for example during snack time or when out exploring in the woods. Children quickly begin to use and understand these words in their own learning and play.

Learning to read is a priority. Children in the early years enjoy regular stories and rhymes. They often choose to share books, which they handle with care. Children start to learn phonics in early years. Staff are experts in early reading. Any pupils who start to struggle or fall behind are swiftly identified and given the help they need to catch up. Pupils learn to read quickly and well.

Children in the early years learn to work and play well together cooperatively. Staff clearly explain and demonstrate to children how they should behave. Adults help children develop self-control by showing them how to share resources and take turns. Pupils across the school understand the importance of sitting nicely, listening to their teachers and following instructions. Pupils attend school regularly. The school works closely with parents to understand and address any barriers to regular school attendance.

The school's high level of commitment to pupils' personal development is clear to see and shared by everyone. Meticulous attention has been given to building pupils' characters by providing extensive opportunities for pupils to learn about themselves and the world. Pupils understand the school's 'HEART' values of honesty, empathy, achievement, resilience and teamwork. They are immensely proud to wear the badges they earn inside and outside the school for demonstrating these attributes. Right from the start in the early years, every opportunity is taken to help children develop their independence, for example through pouring their own milk or learning to put on their coats. Older pupils delight in their roles such as peer mediators.

Staff feel proud to work at the school. Leaders make sure staff workload and well-being are considered. Improvement priorities are appropriate and manageable. The trust works closely with local governors to make sure everyone is well informed and fulfils their roles effectively. Everyone is working together to help secure the very best for the children and the community they serve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school does not have an accurate understanding of the key knowledge pupils have retained and understood in subjects other than English and mathematics. This hampers teachers' ability to build on this knowledge and identify and address any misconceptions. The school should continue to support staff in systematically checking pupils' acquisition of key knowledge over time, so they can do this with increasing accuracy. This will enable staff to support pupils to address any gaps in their knowledge and build on their prior learning successfully.

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

Unique reference number	144915
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10341859
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	312
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tiffany Beck
CEO of the trust	Nicky Osborne
Headteacher	Christian Markham
Website	www.blighprimaryschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Bligh Primary School (Infants) became an academy in October 2017. It is now part of Maritime Academy Trust.
- The school shares a senior leadership team, support staff, administrative staff and a local academy council with Bligh Primary School (Juniors). Both schools are on the same site.
- The headteacher took up post in 2020.
- The school provides wraparound care through a breakfast club and after-school club.
- 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. 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.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with a range of school staff. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the trust, including the chair of the trust and the CEO, and held a separate meeting with some representatives of the local academy council.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, geography and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. The lead inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult as part of the early reading deep dive.
- 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 inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff surveys and spoke to some parents at the school gate.
- The inspectors talked to staff to gather their views about the school, including their workload and well-being. The inspectors met with several groups of pupils, as well as speaking to pupils during lessons and at playtime and lunchtime.

Inspection team

Deborah Perkins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Appleby	Ofsted Inspector
Liz McIntosh	Ofsted Inspector

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