

Inspection of Billingshurst Primary School

Upper Station Road, Billingshurst, West Sussex RH14 9RE

Inspection dates: 28 February and 1 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Billingshurst Primary School say that their teachers are 'always by their side' and treat them with kindness and respect. Pupils are very clear that everyone is welcome at their school. Pupils felt they could talk to staff about any worries they might have, and staff would help them.

A strong focus on oracy helps pupils to become confident communicators. A range of pupil leadership opportunities, including a school and eco council, give all pupils opportunities to contribute to the school. Pupils speak very positively about the residential trips on offer in Year 5 and Year 6. These enable pupils to build on the camaraderie that they have with each other and with staff.

Expectations for pupils' behaviour are high. Leaders ensure that any pupils who struggle to manage these expectations are very well supported. These pupils learn to manage their emotions over time, so that they can be in class, ready to learn.

Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning. However, over time, not all pupils have had the right support to succeed in their learning, including in reading. Some parents and carers, including the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are frustrated because they do not feel their children have received the right help with their learning.

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

Following the school's last inspection in 2019, leaders recognised that they needed to make significant improvements to the quality of education that pupils receive. New leadership appointments this year, along with greater clarity around leaders' roles and responsibilities, mean that the school is now in a stronger position to make sustainable improvements to the quality of education that pupils receive.

Leaders know that too many pupils do not read well enough. Leaders are in the process of addressing this. Leaders and staff have recently been retrained in the school's phonics curriculum. This is improving the teaching of reading. Teachers have now assessed children in Reception and pupils across the school who are at an early stage of learning to read. They are now getting targeted teaching and support daily. Love of reading has been an ongoing focus. Leaders are monitoring how well pupils are progressing through the reading curriculum more carefully now.

Leaders know that they still need to further develop the quality of teaching in early reading. For example, pupils do not consistently get enough time to practise reading decodable books. Staff who teach the lowest-attaining readers, which includes some pupils with SEND, do not always have the necessary expertise to help pupils overcome barriers to learning.

In almost every subject, leaders developed coherent and well-sequenced curriculums. However, the curriculum for children in early years is at an early stage

of development. Leaders in early years have not thought carefully enough about what they want children to know and be able to do, or how to break this learning down into clear steps across the year.

In some subjects, such as art and design, teachers teach the curriculum well, and all pupils are achieving well. In other subjects, including mathematics, teaching does not always take enough account of gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.

Leaders recognise that while they have successfully improved how pupils with SEND are identified and planned for, for some this has come too late to ensure that they are well prepared for the next phase of their education. Furthermore, while some teachers understand the needs of some SEND pupils and are supporting them well, this is not yet consistent across all classes.

Teachers do not use their knowledge of what pupils know well enough to identify pupils' next steps or to pinpoint what they need to work on in class. In some subjects, such as mathematics, teachers use assessment information well to inform interventions that take place out of class. In foundation subjects, assessment information is gathered, but not used to inform teaching.

Behaviour, and personal development are areas of strength for the school. Leaders ensure that all pupils benefit from a range of enriching opportunities, including pottery club and choir. Leaders ensure that a broad range of pupil leadership roles are provided, including house captains, school eco monitors and peer mentors. Peer mentors provide support for pupils on the playground to ensure that everyone is included. Pupils learn about the democratic process through their participation in the school's pupil council.

A number of parents have concerns about the school. Parents do not always feel able to raise their concerns confidently. Leaders and those responsible for governance recognise that there is much work to do to develop parental confidence in the school.

Staff, including early career teachers, feel well supported by leaders. Governance has been significantly strengthened since the last inspection. A new chair of governors was appointed in 2021, and this has been transformative. Governors are now playing an active and determined role in the school's improvement journey. The local authority is also providing the school with ongoing support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained to identify when a pupil might be at risk of harm or has been harmed. Both staff and leaders know pupils, and their families, well. Staff know how to raise a concern about a pupil and are confident that leaders take action to secure the help that pupils need.

There is, however, a less clear process for staff who work with pupils daily to record ongoing observations of pupils once they are known to be vulnerable. This makes it harder for leaders to build a full picture of each vulnerable pupil. Leaders responsible for safeguarding do not always clearly record all actions taken, nor the decisions they reached. Sometimes, key documents are missing from pupils' files.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not established a consistent approach for monitoring vulnerable pupils over time. In addition, safeguarding records are not a consistently accurate reflection of all actions taken to protect pupils. Leaders need to ensure that there are clear and consistent approaches to building a full picture of vulnerable pupils. Leaders need to ensure that their safeguarding records reflect all actions and decisions taken.
- Too many pupils have fallen behind with their reading, and not had the right support to be able to catch up quickly. There are pupils in key stage 2 who are still at an early stage of learning to read. While there is now catch-up in place for those who are behind with reading, training for staff is ongoing. Staff do not always have the expertise needed to support those who struggle to learn to read. Leaders need to continue their work to improve the teaching of early reading.
- The curriculum for early years is at an early stage of development. Not all children, and particularly those with lower starting points, are being well prepared for Year 1. Leaders need to consider carefully what they want children to learn across the seven areas of learning, and how this learning will be broken down and sequenced.
- Not all teachers have the expertise they need to support pupils with SEND to learn effectively. This means that some pupils with SEND are not getting the support they need to achieve the best possible outcomes and be fully prepared for the next phase of their education. Leaders need to continue their work to develop teacher expertise in supporting pupils with SEND to achieve the best possible academic outcomes.
- Assessment is not yet effective enough across subjects. Teachers do not always have a clear understanding of gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Leaders need to continue to develop assessment approaches so that assessment is used to identify next steps and inform teaching on an ongoing basis.

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	135813
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10257076
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	610
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicola Waters
Headteacher	Helen Williamson
Website	www.billingshurstprimary.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	25 and 26 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The deputy headteacher was appointed in 2021.
- Two assistant headteachers were appointed in September 2022.
- The school is not currently using any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors met with the chair of governors, along with a group of governors. Inspectors spoke with a representative of the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science, art and design, computing and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. For the reading deep dive, inspectors listened to pupils in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors considered early years through all deep dives, and also met with early years leaders.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record and spoke to governors, school leaders, staff and pupils. Inspectors considered the safeguarding education that pupils receive. Throughout the inspection, leaders considered and checked the culture of safeguarding within the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including school improvement plans, minutes from recent meetings of the board of governors and a range of external reports.
- Inspectors talked to pupils formally and informally about their learning, and asked what behaviour is like at the school and whether they felt safe at school.
- Inspectors reviewed responses to the staff and pupil surveys and responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including the associated free-text comments. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers at the gate during the inspection.

Inspection team

Alice Roberts, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Caroline Clarke	His Majesty's Inspector
James Everett	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Appleby	Ofsted Inspector

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