

Inspection of Bower Grove School

Fant Lane, Maidstone, Kent ME16 8NL

Inspection dates: 18–19 September 2019

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel really happy and safe at this school. They know that staff care about them deeply and want them to achieve their very best. Pupils told us how much they like the school, they described it as 'amazing'. Pupils said that bullying happens very rarely at Bower Grove. They know that adults will help them promptly if they have any worries or concerns.

Leaders are highly ambitious for pupils and make sure they get exactly the right help to succeed. Staff work extremely closely together, as a team, to help pupils learn to behave well. Staff are highly skilled. They provide carefully planned support to pupils so that they can stay focused on their learning.

Pupils eagerly join in with the wide range of exciting outings and clubs that the school provides. Football club is very popular with many pupils. They are incredibly proud that they get to go on overnight trips to outdoor activity centres. Pupils especially look forward to the trip to France in Year 8. Members of the school choir talked enthusiastically about the concerts they perform in the local community. Rich, thoughtfully planned experiences provide numerous opportunities for pupils to explore new interests and build self-confidence.

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

Leaders take enormous care to organise pupils' learning so that they gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to be successful in life. This ensures that pupils move forward quickly after difficult experiences before they join the school.

Leaders and staff all share the same high aspirations for pupils to achieve well. Pupils study a broad range of thoughtfully selected subjects. Learning is proficiently organised and sequenced so that pupils know and remember more. Staff make expert use of information in pupils' education, health and care plans to decide the best way for each pupil to learn. Staff skilfully change the way they teach to help each child succeed.

Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for when they leave the school. Staff give each pupil extensive personal support to find just the right work experience placements and college courses for them. Some pupils get part-time jobs because they do so well in their work placements. Impressively, all the pupils who left the school last year, apart from a few who were too unwell, are continuing their learning in college.

Reading is a strength of the school. Pupils develop a love of reading because staff share lots of different types of books and stories with them. Books are carefully chosen to inspire pupils to want to read and learn more as they progress. The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is expertly organised.

Teachers quickly spot pupils who fall behind with the school's programme and make sure they get precisely the right help to keep up.

A varied and exciting programme of experiences, in and out of school, successfully enriches pupils' learning. Exceptional opportunities inspire pupils to learn new talents, skills and interests. Activities are purposefully planned to develop pupils' character, encouraging them to be confident and resilient. Numerous overnight and off-site visits encourage pupils to work together, respect each other and develop positive attitudes towards their learning.

Pupils are exceptionally tolerant of each other's differences. Pupils told us they feel that they belong at the school. They say it feels like a family.

Pupils are remarkably knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe online. Older pupils explained confidently how they check their security settings are correct when using social media. Pupils understand that their 'digital footprint' is permanent and can be used by others to harm them. Pupils know they need to be careful about how they use the internet.

Staff are highly skilled in sensitively supporting each pupil to understand their emotions. Proficient staff use exactly the same techniques to promote pupils' positive behaviour. These approaches are highly effective. Parents told us they appreciate the way staff expertly improve their child's behaviour. Pupils proudly told us how their behaviour is continually getting better.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff work diligently as a team to keep pupils safe. Staff know pupils and their families extremely well. Staff are highly vigilant about keeping pupils safe because they are exceptionally well trained. Regular updates ensure that safeguarding is firmly at the forefront of everyone's mind. Staff are acutely aware of the risks that pupils face in their community and when online. They promptly report any concerns about a pupil's welfare to leaders. Staff are exceptionally dedicated. They work tenaciously with other agencies and professionals, often going beyond what might be expected, to keep pupils safe.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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

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| Unique reference number | 119036 |
| Local authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 10054145 |
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Foundation special |
| Age range of pupils | 5 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 205 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Alison White |
| Headteacher | Lynn Salter |
| Website | www.bower-grove.kent.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 9 January 2018 |

Information about this school

- Bower Grove is a special school which caters for pupils from the ages of 5 to 16 years. There were no children on roll in the early years foundation stage at the time of this inspection.
- Bower Grove provides for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. Nearly half of the pupils in the school also have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school was using one alternative provider, Tutor Doctor, at the time of this inspection.
- A primary class is situated on the site of West Borough Primary School. The pupils who attend are on the roll of Bower Grove and taught by staff from Bower Grove.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders and a group of support staff.

- Inspectors evaluated the quality of education by looking in detail at the teaching of reading, mathematics, modern foreign languages, religious education, physical education and design technology. We discussed the curriculum design with leaders, carried out lesson visits, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers, from the lessons visited, about the curriculum.
- Procedures and practice for keeping pupils safe were thoroughly evaluated. The school's single central record was reviewed. We met with the designated safeguarding lead, scrutinised documentation, including a sample of case files, and spoke to pupils and staff.
- Meetings were held with governors, including the chair of the governing body, and with the school improvement partner from the local authority.
- The inspection team met with pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally about the school. Thirty-two pupils responded to Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- Inspectors took account of the 22 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, and 14 additional free-text responses. An inspector met with a few parents at the beginning of the first day of the inspection.
- We considered the views of 51 members of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Claire Prince, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Simon Yates

Ofsted Inspector

Emma Phillips

Ofsted Inspector

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