

# Barons Court Primary School and Nursery

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	114787
<b>Local authority</b>	Southend-on-Sea
<b>Inspection number</b>	378928
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 February 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Selwyn Ward

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	206
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Anne Purdham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gyl Wood
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	Avenue Road Westcliff-on-Sea SS0 7PJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01702 331356
<b>Fax number</b>	01702 391019
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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	23–24 February 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	378928



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Selwyn Ward

Additional inspector

Fatiha Maitland

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 33 lessons taught by 11 teachers, with a particular focus on writing. Inspectors listened to pupils read, and spoke with parents and carers, groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, school development planning, school self-evaluation, leaders' monitoring of teaching, the notes of the school's external adviser and the questionnaire responses of 56 pupils, 34 staff and 111 parents and carers.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. When it was last inspected, it was an infant school which pupils left at the end of Year 2. In September 2010, it began the transition to an all-through primary school, where pupils stay until the end of Year 6. It will complete the transition in September 2013. At the time of this inspection, the oldest pupils were midway through Year 4. The school moved to a new-build and refurbished onsite development in November 2010, designed to reflect the school's vision, so that pupils are taught in open, flexible teaching areas for each key stage. The large majority of pupils are White British, with a proportion coming from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average, as is the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Of these, the largest group have moderate learning difficulties. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. The school has a number of awards including, the Challenge Award, the Quality Mark, Activemark, Artsmark Gold and International School awards, as well as Healthy Schools status. Barons Court offers extended school facilities through its daily breakfast club and through the Community Library and Information Centre (CLIC) which provides support and learning opportunities for families.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This is a good school where pupils from all backgrounds achieve well. Although the school has some outstanding features, it is not outstanding overall because pupils do not achieve as well in writing as they do in reading and mathematics, and because the large majority of teaching is good rather than outstanding.
- In this well-run school, leaders' monitoring has ensured pupils all make good progress in reading and mathematics, and that teaching is good. The headteacher, leadership team and the governing body have successfully managed the move to new buildings and the transition to an all-through primary while sustaining and building on the school's many strengths. A feature that particularly stands out at this school is its innovative curriculum that excites and motivates pupils so that all are eager to learn. This contributes, in turn, to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' attainment is consistently above average. Attainment in writing is not as high as in reading and mathematics, particularly because the more-able pupils who attain higher levels in those subjects do not all match this achievement in writing.
- Teaching is good. Teachers work in close partnership with each other and with support staff to make very effective use of the shared teaching areas. Pupils benefit from being taught for much of the day in sets broadly matched to ability, but work within sets is not always tailored closely enough to individual learning needs, especially for the most able.
- Pupils feel very safe at school and their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils' attentiveness and enthusiasm contribute exceptionally well to their confidence and success as independent learners.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By summer 2013, increase the proportion of pupils attaining above age-related

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expectations in writing so that achievement matches the levels found in reading and mathematics by:

- maximising more opportunities for pupils to apply and extend their writing skills in subjects other than English
- matching work to pupils' different capabilities so that the most able are always challenged
- when they are writing, giving pupils of all ages clear reminders of key spellings and punctuation
- encouraging pupils to take greater care with their handwriting and the presentation of their work
- ensuring that all marking is rigorous in identifying spelling and punctuation errors.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers rightly believe their children make good progress at Barons Court. Children join the school with skills and capabilities generally below those expected for their ages. They make good progress in all of the six areas of learning of the Early Years Foundation Stage so that they mostly start Year 1 with attainment that is broadly average. Pupils go on to make good progress in Key Stage 1. As a result, pupils are the equivalent of four to six months ahead of the national average by the end of Year 2. The lessons observed and work seen confirmed that progress is typically good for all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language. The attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is especially impressive. In 2011, these pupils were almost a year ahead of pupils in similar circumstances nationally. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 and 4.

Notwithstanding this positive picture, attainment in writing continues to lag behind the above-average levels in reading and mathematics in both key stages, as it has in each of the years since the last inspection. This is in the large part due to the relatively small number of pupils attaining higher levels in writing. In the 2011 assessments at the end of Year 2, for example, only a fifth of those who attained Level 3 in reading and mathematics attained the same level in writing. Initiatives have been introduced to improve writing but these have not proven as effective as school leaders hoped. Although it is narrowing, pupils' current work shows a continuing gap between more-able pupils' attainment in reading and mathematics and their attainment in writing.

### Quality of teaching

Teachers mostly display high expectations of what the pupils can achieve. They move lessons on at a good pace, so pupils get through a lot of work. Despite the limitations of the compact school site, the curriculum has been adapted extremely

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well to provide pupils with memorable learning experiences. Though there is very little woodland in the vicinity, teachers have adapted the 'forest school' initiative by regularly taking pupils down to Westcliff beach for outdoor learning. The school's own outdoor space and the open-plan teaching areas are also used to very good effect, and pupils comment on how much they enjoy what all see as a bright and spacious learning environment. Parents and carers endorse this view. All those who returned questionnaires expressed the view that the quality of teaching is good. Many wrote to commend the way staff have helped their children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as well as their academic achievement. There was also strong praise from parents and carers for the support provided to cater for their children's special educational needs.

There are examples of pupils making exceptional progress where teachers challenge and extend them. This was seen, for example, in mathematics as a teacher introduced a group of able Reception children to Venn diagrams. Confronted with a circle marked 'brother' and another marked 'sister', the children quickly grasped the notion that these could be used to sort the members of the group. They realised that those without siblings should be placed outside the circles. They also worked out for themselves that by overlapping the circles they could appropriately sort those in the group with both a brother and a sister. As a result, this group demonstrated capabilities in mathematics way beyond those normally expected for children of this age. By contrast, however, more-able pupils are not always challenged enough, especially in writing. Opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils of all abilities to apply their literacy and writing skills in subjects other than English. Key Stage 1 pupils showed much interest in and knowledge about their history topic, but their writing was hampered by a lack of key words or other writing prompts to aid them with their spelling and punctuation. Some pupils' work is let down through untidy presentation and poor handwriting. Teachers' marking mainly gives clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their work, but there is not always enough rigour in identifying pupils' spelling and punctuation errors.

**Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils are unfailingly polite. Many take it upon themselves to approach visitors to the school and offer them a personal greeting. As the great majority of parents, carers, and pupils confirm, conduct in lessons and around the school is of a consistently high standard. Incidents of bullying of any kind are very rare, as is any form of misbehaviour. Even though pupils work in open-plan teaching areas where they can hear and often see the activities of other classes, it is rare for this to cause any loss of concentration or distraction. On the very rare occasion where pupils' attention does sometimes drift, it is typically because a lesson introduction goes on for too long, with pupils expected to listen passively to the teacher. Pupils from different backgrounds get on very well together, making the school a harmonious and cohesive community.

Throughout the school, pupils are eager to learn, with many quick to volunteer

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answers to teachers' questions. Pupils listen well to the teacher and other adults in the class, even if they do not all always listen quite as carefully to each other. Pupils and their parents and carers confidently describe the school as a safe place.

Attendance has greatly improved since the last inspection. It was previously below average and is now above.

## **Leadership and management**

Leaders have managed well the many changes since the last inspection. They, and the governing body, have not allowed, for example, the extensive building works to distract them from their focus on attainment and pupils' welfare and progress. Arrangements for pupils' safeguarding fully meet regulatory requirements. They go beyond this in the way children are routinely involved in contributing to risk assessments, for example in preparing for their regular visits for outdoor learning at the local beach. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored, with swift action taken to make appropriate changes to the curriculum and other provision to meet the needs of any pupils identified as falling behind. Recent assessments, for example, identified that a small number of pupils in Year 4 had made slower progress than others in writing. Changes were made to the timetabling of guided reading sessions to provide more time for the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) to better equip pupils to tackle unfamiliar spellings. Similarly, an initiative has been introduced to improve pupils' fine motor skills and, thereby, their handwriting. These show the school's effectiveness in ensuring equality of opportunity. They also demonstrate the school's capacity for improvement and the effectiveness of a leadership team that is analytical and which works together very well in searching out ways of improving provision. Leaders can point to some key successes, for example in developing the school's impressive curriculum and in turning around the school's previously below average attendance. They have not been as successful in improving attainment in writing.

Leaders monitor lessons and give feedback to teachers on what they see. Although their lesson observations have an appropriate focus on learning, they do not always confirm that, for example, in lessons judged outstanding, that all pupils make rapid progress. The areas for development identified in lesson observations are not always fully recorded. Leaders have already acknowledged this and are in the process of setting up professional development for all staff with leadership roles on observing and evaluating each other's lessons.

The curriculum is outstanding because it provides a stimulating learning environment for all pupils. Topics are organised so as to develop pupils as independent learners. The emphasis on outdoor learning is greatly appreciated by pupils, parents and carers alike. Parents and carers also voice considerable praise for the school's work with the CLIC. One wrote, 'The CLIC courses allow me to make friends and learn new skills and help my child to learn.' Another commented, 'It helped us integrate and learn English, as we came from abroad.' Parents and carers are equally positive about the very regular information they each have on how well their children are

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doing, through half-termly learning conferences. The breadth of the curriculum is recognised through the school's many awards, including the International Schools award, which contributes to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they learn about different ways of life around the world. The cultural diversity within the school is widely celebrated. For example, in the Key Stage 1 teaching area, teachers quote, not inappropriately, the Australian anthem in proclaiming, 'We are one but we are many, and from all the lands on earth we come.' In addition to a daily breakfast club, the school offers an impressive array of extra-curricular activities. These cover a very diverse range of interests, including tag rugby, baton twirling, chefs, ukulele and Glee. The take-up rate is very high, with almost every child a participant in at least one after-school club.

Although some grades in this inspection are not as high as those in the last inspection report, this does not reflect any diminution in standards but rather the changes in inspection criteria.



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



27 February 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Barons Court Primary School and Nursery, Westcliff-on-Sea, SS0 7PJ**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we came to visit your school. Barons Court is a good school. It is well run. You benefit from good teaching that helps you to make good progress and reach above average standards, but you do not all do quite as well in writing as you do in reading and mathematics. For that reason, we have suggested some ways of helping more of you to attain the higher levels in writing that you already attain in reading and mathematics. You can help by taking extra care always to check your spellings and punctuation, and to ensure your handwriting is as neat as it can be.

The behaviour we saw in lessons and around the school was exemplary, and you and your parents and carers told us that what we saw was typical of your experience at Barons Court. You listen carefully to your teachers, although we noticed that you do not all listen quite as well to each other's contributions in lessons. That is something you could try hard to improve for yourselves. It is pleasing to see how much your attendance has improved. It is now above average.

What particularly stands out at Barons Court is the imaginative curriculum, which is helping each of you to develop as independent learners and which contributes to your exceptionally strong personal development. You told us how much you enjoy the many opportunities you have for outdoor learning. Likewise, your parents and carers told us how much they appreciated the information they have on how well you are doing and the CLIC provision that helps them to support your learning at home.

Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful on our visit, and our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward  
Lead inspector

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