

Barming Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118508
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358365
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2011
Reporting inspector	John Stewart

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	391
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Price
Headteacher	Robin Halls
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who saw 16 lessons taught by 15 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation about pupils' progress, policies, particularly those in respect of safeguarding, school development planning and evidence of school self-evaluation. They considered 126 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and 10 staff and 105 pupil questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Why pupils' attainment is lower and progress appears to be slower in mathematics than in English?
- How effectively the school is meeting the needs of girls and pupils with different academic abilities?
- What is the impact of actions taken by leaders at all levels, including the governing body, to drive improvement since the previous inspection.

Information about the school

This primary school is larger than average. Several significant changes in staff have taken place in the past 18 months, including the headteacher. The school has more boys than girls. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of other minority ethnic heritages is below the national average and includes pupils from a variety of Asian or Black British or Black African heritages. A significant minority of these pupils speak more than one language but few are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities is broadly average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there are two Reception classes. The school has several awards reflecting its commitment to healthy lifestyles.

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

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Barming Primary is a satisfactory school. It has good features, especially in the quality of care, guidance and support provided for pupils. This is highly valued by parents and carers and contributes to the strong links that the school has forged with them. It is a welcoming school in which pupils say they feel safe and are aware of their own safety and that of others. Pupils are happy and benefit from warm relationships with adults. They display good attitudes to learning, behave well and children from different backgrounds get on well together. Though pupils do not have enough understanding of the diversity of cultures in the wider community, they contribute well to the school and local community. They are keen to take responsibilities in class and around school, for example helping to prepare for assemblies. The school council is an effective forum for pupils to share their views and plays an active role in developing the school. Pupils have very positive views about most of the school's work. They know the benefits of leading healthy lifestyles, reflecting the awards achieved and high numbers participate in sports.

Pupils' attainment is broadly average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. Children get off to a satisfactory start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Throughout the rest of the school attainment and progress have been variable. Attainment and progress in English have been significantly above mathematics throughout the school and boys have traditionally out performed girls in Year 6. Despite a significant decline in 2009 there was a marked improvement in 2010 and these variations are reducing. The school assessment records show that pupils are on track to attain above-average standards and make good progress in English, especially in reading. The headteacher's good leadership is starting to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum. This is especially evident in mathematics, where pupils' attainment is rising and their progress is rapidly improving and the school is on track to meet its target set for mathematics. Boys have traditionally made better progress overall than girls but the gap is closing. ♦

Pupils enjoy their lessons, as indicated by above-average attendance. A comment made by one pupil typified many, 'All subjects are quite fun.' The school has recognised the lack of consistently good progress in mathematics and has introduced a 'Mathematics Week'. This has helped pupils to develop their collaborative skills, enthuses them and has enabled them to use their skills and knowledge in a variety of imaginative activities. However, learning in lessons is still too variable between subjects and across the school. Pupils make good progress when activities offer challenges that are well matched to their abilities, lessons proceed at a brisk pace and pupils are fully aware of the expectations for independent learning. However, these are not consistent features of teaching and learning. In some lessons pupils are not fully aware of what they are expected to learn. A

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good range of extra curricular activities, especially in sport, the arts and music, enriches the satisfactory curriculum and enhances learning.

Leaders have identified clear priorities for improvement based on accurate and effective self-evaluation of the school's performance. Recent progress and the commitment of the head teacher, senior staff and governors demonstrates that the school has a satisfactory capacity to sustain further improvement and raise attainment in weaker areas. The governing body is supportive of the school but members do not visit the school sufficiently regularly to gain first hand knowledge of its strengths and areas for improvement.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment, especially in mathematics by:
 - improving the quality of teaching and learning through increasing the pace and level of challenge in lessons and developing a greater capacity for independent learning
 - ensuring that pupils are consistently aware of what they are going to learn.
- Improve the governing body's first hand knowledge of the school in order that it can support the senior leaders in driving forward improvements.
- Enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of the diversity of cultures in the United Kingdom and further afield.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Children enter school with broadly average skills and historically pupils' attainment and progress have been broadly average. However, pupils are beginning to use their problem-solving skills more frequently in lessons because teaching is better focused on developing pupils' mathematical skills. Such changes are starting to have a positive impact, as most pupils are on track to make, at least, expected progress in mathematics. School checks on pupils' progress indicate that girls' progress is in line with boys'. In a mathematics lesson, Year 4 pupils enjoyed working alongside Year 1 pupils and learning about symmetry, having made mirror images of their shapes. Work in pupils' books shows that higher-attaining pupils are making good progress in writing and use their skills effectively when writing for different purposes. Learning is not as effective in lessons where the work does not provide sufficient challenge.

Pupils feel safe in school because they feel listened to and know that they can share any concerns with adults. Pupils contribute soundly to the school and local community. They have raised funds for local and global charities and provided toys and games for children in other parts of the world. They act as peer mediators and help to resolve any conflicts. Pupils participate in activities run by the church and have contributed to the local 'Big Tidy' initiative. They like learning when it is fun and enjoy the opportunity to participate in a wide range of sports and clubs and visit different places that bring their learning to life. This is reflected in pupils' good attendance. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and coupled with broadly-average attainment, pupils are soundly prepared for the next stage of their education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The recent improvements in teaching, better use of use of assessment data and regular pupil progress meetings are starting to have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Warm relationships and teachers' high expectations for behaviour and listening underpin pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to learning. Teachers ask questions to a wide range of pupils who answer willingly and keenly. The 'Mathematics Week' and other topic weeks provide pupils with good opportunities to collaborate with other pupils, including those from other classes. Although teachers have secure knowledge, helping them to plan tasks that are enjoyable and interactive, pupils are not always clear about what they are learning. Too often, tasks do not provide suitable challenge for different groups, especially in mathematics. Opportunities for pupils to develop their independent thinking skills are inconsistent. Teachers mark work regularly and the school has devised a new system to identify pupils' good work and areas for improvement. The systems are not fully embedded and comments do not always help pupils know what they need to do to improve their work. Teaching assistants help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to play a full part in lessons which helps them to learn appropriately from their starting points. Most pupils think that they are well taught, a view shared by most parents and carers.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The good leadership of the headteacher has been instrumental in the positive changes that are raising teachers' expectations. Senior leaders share his vision and ambition to do more to improve provision. The key priorities in school development planning focus very clearly on improving pupils' learning. A strong feature is the increased accountability of staff for the progress of pupils in their class and the positive impact of actions to improve mathematics. Leaders monitor the progress of pupils carefully and set challenging targets. Good leadership in English has sustained above-average attainment and good progress. Leadership in mathematics is ambitious to improve learning and has introduced a wide range of strategies to support staff, improve the curriculum and help parents and carers to support their children further. Monitoring of teaching is soundly consistent and staff are clear about the expectations and the areas that need to improve.

Senior leaders in the school have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors have received training to enable them to analyse data effectively. However, their knowledge of the school is not sufficiently based on first hand evidence as they have limited day-to-day involvement in the school. Equality of opportunity is suitably promoted and the school does not tolerate any discrimination. Partnerships with local secondary schools are strongly enhancing pupils' sporting, information and communication technology and mathematical development. Safeguarding and child protection procedures meet requirements. The vetting of staff and the welfare of pupils is a high priority in the school. The school promotes cohesion within the local community well but pupils are not sufficiently aware of the diversity of cultures in the United Kingdom and beyond.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress and attain age-related skills in most areas by the end of Reception. They make good progress in some areas, notably in personal and physical development. Teachers are particularly effective in helping children to work independently and develop their self-esteem. Recent improvements to provide a more structured approach to phonics are helping children to link letters and sounds. Leaders apply rules and procedures consistently so that children feel safe and display good behaviour. Relationships are good and children cooperate well in pairs and small groups. The school has developed sound processes to gather information about children's progress, but these do not yet identify and inform the next steps for learning for each child. Teachers plan tasks that take account of children's interests, especially in literacy and physical development. Children enjoyed taking risks when trying out new climbing and balancing skills on equipment in a physical education lesson. They use computers confidently and look carefully at shapes and patterns. Adults are very caring and mindful of children's welfare. Leaders are willing to adapt their ideas and practice to meet the needs of children. They have taken steps to ♦satisfactorily drive improvement in areas of relative weakness, especially in linking sounds and letters and calculating, but these are not fully embedded. Adults are developing good links with parents and carers, though a few feel that they would like more formal opportunities to discuss their children's progress. Leaders have established a positive team spirit in which all adults share the vision for improvement, for example, the development and monitoring of the activities in the outside areas to ensure that adults extend children's learning more consistently.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

There was a higher than average return rate of the Ofsted questionnaire. Most parents and carers were very positive about the school, citing good care, children who are happy in school, effective leadership and teaching and how the school helps children to lead a healthy lifestyle. There were a few negative comments. A few parents and carers feel that children are not making enough progress. Although most feel the school deals well with any unacceptable behaviour, there are a few who disagree. Inspectors found that pupils' progress is satisfactory and behaviour good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Barming Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The Inspection team received 126 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 391 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	83	66	39	31	3	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	72	57	52	41	1	1	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	40	32	65	52	17	13	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	39	59	47	12	10	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	55	44	57	45	8	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	37	63	50	13	10	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	57	45	65	52	4	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	43	34	66	52	3	2	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	51	40	62	49	6	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	30	71	56	7	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	38	58	46	8	6	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	60	48	55	44	5	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	70	56	49	39	3	2	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



5 March 2011

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Barming Primary School, Maidstone, ME16 9DY

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school recently.

We enjoyed meeting you and are pleased that you enjoy school. We discovered that you behave well and you know how to keep safe and lead healthy lifestyles. You get on well with your teachers and other pupils and make a good contribution to the school and local community. You really enjoyed the 'Mathematics Week' and the wide range of different activities that your teachers planned to help you reach higher standards in mathematics. You told us how well the school looks after you and we agree.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education, which means it does some things well but some things need to be improved. So we have asked your school's leaders and teachers to do the following things to help your school improve further:

- Help you to reach higher standards especially in mathematics and develop your basic skills. These will help you become more confident to work independently and make faster progress. We have asked teachers to always let you know what you are learning and set work at the right level for you.
- Enable governors to visit the school more often to get better first-hand knowledge about how well you are doing.
- Provide more opportunities for you to learn about different cultures in other parts of this country and abroad.

You can play your part by working hard and making sure that everyone does the very best they can.

Yours sincerely

John Stewart

Lead inspector

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