

North Borough Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118301
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358305
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeff Tree
Headteacher	Christine Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2008
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 17 lessons taught by eight teachers. Meetings were held with parents and carers, members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school documentation, including teachers' planning, assessment information, safeguarding policies and samples of pupils' work. Inspectors analysed 79 questionnaires from parents and carers, 19 from staff and 106 from pupils.

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

- The effectiveness of the school's new approach to teaching mathematics.
- The consistency of teaching and how well it meets differing needs.
- The role of leaders at all levels in monitoring teaching and learning and in driving sustained school improvement.
- Pupils' responsibility taking and their understanding of how to improve their work.

Information about the school

Most pupils come to this average sized junior school from the local community. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. These pupils have a wide range of needs, including specific learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The majority of pupils are from White British families, but around a quarter are from minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language. Only a small number are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The most common first language for these pupils is Nepali and Polish.

Quakers, the after-school club that shares the school site, is not managed by the governing body and was not inspected.

The school has Silver Eco-School status and an Activemark for its work in physical education.

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

This satisfactory school touches the lives of pupils in many positive ways. The school takes pupils with a very wide range of social and educational needs, and the challenges this provides are embraced by members of staff. They provide good-quality pastoral support to pupils and their families. Adults are particularly successful at helping pupils to develop an enthusiasm for learning and ensuring that they are settled and happy at school.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' attainment has improved across the school over the last two years and it is broadly average by the end of Year 6. Pupils make the best progress in mathematics, where leaders have revamped how the subject is being taught. In numeracy lessons, pupils are tested weekly and most teachers use this information well to identify and then to tackle gaps in their knowledge. This has had a good effect on pupils' learning. A start has been made to introducing a similar structure into literacy lessons, but it is not as well embedded and pupils' attainment continues to be lower in writing than in reading. Pupils do not get enough opportunities to use their writing skills in different subjects and this slows the pace at which they can improve.

Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. They quickly improve their language skills and most attain well in national tests at the end of Year 6. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds play together happily and are sensitive to each other's beliefs.

There was good teaching seen in nearly every year group, but leaders are aware that there is inconsistency across the school and that in Year 3, in particular, teachers' expectations are not always high enough. Throughout the school, teachers make learning enjoyable, but work is not always matched closely enough to the needs of all pupils, and this also explains why too much teaching is satisfactory.

Pupils behave well and thoroughly enjoy school, especially the wide range of clubs and visits. These greatly enrich the curriculum and contribute strongly to pupils' good personal development. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles and they feel very safe. As one pupil commented, 'There is always someone to talk to if you have a worry.'

Pupils keenly take responsibility for tasks around school by being house captains, prefects and school councillors. The school council gives pupils a good voice and they are pleased that adults listen to their ideas. Recent improvements in target setting are helping pupils to be clearer about the next steps in their learning. However, this is not consistently strong across the school and pupils do not yet take enough responsibility for improving their own work.

The school is improving because leaders have created an ethos in which everyone is valued and respected. There are satisfactory systems for evaluating school effectiveness.

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Consequently, leaders have a realistic view of how well the school is currently performing. Subject leaders are keen and enthusiastic and where they have been involved in monitoring lessons, for example in mathematics, they are helping to improve teaching and learning and to drive improvement. This practice is not yet consistently strong in all subjects and recent initiatives in literacy are not being checked closely enough to ensure that they are applied consistently and are having the desired effect on pupils' learning.

Leaders have a wealth of data about pupils' progress. They analyse this information in detail to find out where improvement is needed and they are doing the right things to advance progress more quickly. Many successes in the last year are securely helping to raise attainment, especially in mathematics. The improving track record of achievement combined along with determined leadership demonstrates that there is a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

The school has a good partnership with outside agencies and other groups and engages well with parents and carers. Leaders work successfully to break down the barriers between home and school and they keep parents and carers well informed about their children's learning. Recent curriculum meetings are helping parents and carers to become increasingly involved in supporting their children's learning. They are very appreciative of the way that there is always someone to talk to if they need support.

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?

- Move remaining satisfactory teaching to good by ensuring that work is consistently pitched at the right level for pupils and, especially in Year 3, that expectations are always high enough.
- Improve pupils' attainment in writing by:
 - ensuring that leaders monitor literacy teaching more regularly to check that recent initiatives are being applied consistently across the school and are having the desired effect
 - embedding the use of literacy skills into different subjects.
- Ensure that all pupils are clear about the next steps in their learning so that they can take more responsibility for improving work for themselves.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. They attend regularly and their achievement is satisfactory. From their broadly average starting points in Year 3, pupils make satisfactory or better progress in lessons, meaning that they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education. In around a half of lessons, progress is no more than satisfactory and work is sometimes too hard or too easy for some pupils. For example, in a Year 3 science lesson, all pupils worked on the same task as they investigated gravity, and skills improved only slowly because they got overexcited and were unclear about what they were trying to learn. In a Year 5 literacy lesson, pupils enjoyed thinking about the key features of a good poem but not all were involved well enough in discussions. In lessons where pupils' progress is good, there is a faster pace to learning and they are expected to

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work independently. For example, in a good Year 4 numeracy lesson, pupils worked together sensibly to try to work out the perimeters of different shapes. Pupils worked hard and were fully engaged because they were being challenged to think like mathematicians. In a good literacy lesson in Year 6, pupils were supported well by the teacher as they looked in detail at a text and tried to identify the different characteristics of a story. The teacher asked challenging questions and learning moved on quickly because pupils behaved well and cooperated sensibly.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. They make the best progress outside lessons, when well-planned provision, including access to nurture groups in 'The Blue Room', meets differing needs effectively and helps them to acquire new skills quickly. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported well and make good progress.

Pupils become responsible young citizens and there is a delightful atmosphere in most lessons. Relationships between classmates and adults are very good and pupils work hard most of the time, although they do not always take enough care with how they present their work. Pupils are sociable and articulate and talk very confidently to visitors. They show good concern for the needs of others by raising funds for charity, sometimes organising these by themselves.

Pupils have a good awareness of how to live healthy lifestyles. They grow their own food in the school's gardens and participate enthusiastically in physical exercise. Pupils are involved well in the local community and their work on improving the environment has been recognised in the school's Eco-School award.

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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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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?

Adults place pupils' well-being at the centre of their work and they work extremely hard to make school a happy and safe place to be. There is a good partnership with outside agencies to provide additional support for pupils who are having problems at home or at school and to help families who may face challenging circumstances. Pupils with emotional, social or behavioural difficulties are supported extremely well by highly skilled teaching assistants in 'The Blue Room' and this ensures that they only rarely have a negative impact on the learning of others. The school's procedures to raise attendance are ensuring its steady improvement.

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very effectively and make good use of resources to make learning exciting. For example, in a Year 4 literacy lesson, well-chosen clips from a book were shown on an interactive whiteboard to encourage pupils to think more deeply about the story. Teachers often assess learning carefully and, where teaching is good, use this information to plan what to teach next. Such good practice is not consistent and, consequently, too much teaching is satisfactory. In a few lessons, mainly in Year 3, teachers' expectations are not high enough and this means that pupils do not always produce their best work. There has been some effective, recent work on setting targets for pupils. This initiative is helping to strengthen pupils' understanding of how to improve their work but practice is not consistently strong across the school.

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The curriculum is interesting and varied and supports pupils' good personal development extremely well. Learning is enriched through an exciting range of visits and visitors, as well as a good number of clubs, especially in sport. The school's good work in physical education is reflected in its well-deserved Activemark. Special weeks help to bring subjects alive. For example, a Year 5 pupil spoke very positively about a recent science week where 'I learnt to make shelters and to think like a scientist'. The school has made a good start to making learning more purposeful by linking subjects together and its innovative approach to improving provision in numeracy is already proving effective. However, there are still missed opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their writing skills in lessons.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The calm and purposeful leadership of the headteacher and other senior leaders is having a positive impact on the work of the school. Together they are identifying the right priorities for improvement and their drive and ambition are satisfactorily embedded across the school. There is a very strong and successful focus on developing the emotional and social well-being of pupils, and this is greatly appreciated by parents and carers. Leaders are now rightly working on raising attainment and a good start has been made to this with recent initiatives in mathematics. Leaders are proactively removing the remaining inconsistencies in teaching and they have good plans in place to focus more sharply on monitoring literacy lessons in the next academic year. The governing body provides sound support and challenge, although it is too reliant on the school for information rather than checking provision for itself.

The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination successfully. Leaders use data precisely to analyse the progress of different groups and they are responding quickly to any variations in performance so that attainment and achievement are rising. Pupils who are at an early stage in learning English as an additional language rapidly gain an effective working knowledge of the language and they progress well. Pupils from different backgrounds show good respect for each other and there is no discrimination. Parents and carers from all social and ethnic backgrounds are confident that their children enjoy school and are well cared for.

Good engagement with parents and carers and strong partnerships with outside agencies helps leaders to respond quickly to local community needs. Pupils develop a good cultural awareness through global partnerships and links with Ghurkha families at the local army barracks but their understanding of life in other parts of Britain is less strong. The school

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is rightly seeking to strengthen this further by seeking to establish links with a school in a different socio-economic setting in another part of the country.

Pupils' safety is given a high priority and this is reflected in every aspect of school life. Leaders are diligent in ensuring that everyone is able to work in a safe environment, and this is greatly appreciated by parents and carers and pupils.

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	2
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

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are happy with the work of the school. Positive comments included, 'The care of my son and the sensitive way that they help him has been excellent.' Another wrote: 'Staff are very approachable and work well with parents and children.' A few parents and carers feel that the school does not tackle unacceptable behaviour well enough. Inspectors saw very little poor behaviour and found that there are good procedures for dealing with it when it does occur.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at North Borough Junior 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 79 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 223 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	34	47	59	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	43	44	56	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	33	42	41	52	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	37	43	54	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	35	44	39	49	4	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	38	42	53	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	33	46	58	3	4	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)	24	30	49	62	3	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	27	50	63	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	27	45	57	8	10	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	18	54	68	5	6	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	24	30	46	58	3	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	43	42	53	2	3	0	0

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



6 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of North Borough School, Maidstone ME14 2BP

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for showing us your work and completing the questionnaire. You were very polite and friendly. At the moment, your school provides a satisfactory education. This means that we found some good things in your school but also areas that need improving.

Some of the things we found out about your school.

- Satisfactory teaching means that you make satisfactory progress as you move through the school. You currently do best in mathematics, where teachers test you regularly and use this information to help you to improve.
- Your behaviour is good and you get on well together.
- There are lots of exciting things to do both in and out of lessons. The science week sounded great fun.
- All adults in school are kind and caring and they give you suitable help when you find work difficult.
- You happily take responsibility and school councillors are doing a good job for you.
- The headteacher and other leaders know what needs improving and are taking the right steps to move things forward more quickly.
- Most of your parents and carers are pleased that you come to this school.

What we have asked your school to do now.

- Make sure that work is pitched at the right level for all of you and that teachers always expect enough of you.
- Improve your attainment in writing by checking that you get enough opportunities to write in different subjects and making sure that leaders monitor literacy lessons regularly.
- Make sure that you are all clear about how to improve your work so that you can take more responsibility for your own learning.

We wish you all well for the future. You can all help your teachers by trying to always present your work neatly.

Yours sincerely

Mike Capper

Lead inspector

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