

Barnsole Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118419
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	379617
Inspection dates	22–23 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	244
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathan Locke
Headteacher	Alison Pullen
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 November 2008
School address	Sturdee Avenue Gillingham ME7 2JE
Telephone number	01634 333380
Fax number	01634 333389
Email address	office@barnsoleinf.medway.sch.uk

Registered childcare provision	The Wendy House
Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	67
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	13 May 2009

Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	22–23 November 2011
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 18 lessons led by nine teachers and two teaching assistants, and observed an assembly. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, a group of pupils, and staff, including staff teaching in the junior school who also hold responsibilities across both schools. They observed the school's work, and looked at planning documents, assessment information and pupils' work. In addition, inspectors received and analysed questionnaires from 89 parents and carers, and scrutinised others from staff.

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

- How well teachers use the information about pupils' progress to ensure that the needs of different groups are met, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or speak English as an additional language.
- The extent to which the curriculum interests pupils, to promote a love of learning and their achievement.
- How well children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are helped to acquire early literacy skills.

Information about the school

Barnsole Infant School is larger than the average primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A range of other heritages are represented in small numbers. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language has increased since the last inspection, and is now above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high.

The school has worked in collaboration with the neighbouring Barnsole Junior School since April 2009, when the head of the infant school became executive headteacher of both schools. A formal federation has been in place since April 2010. The federation also shares a governing body and a senior leadership team. The junior school was inspected at the same time as part of coordinated inspection arrangements. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of three classes. A pre-school, The Wendy House, operates on site and is run by the governing body.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Barnsole Infant School is a good school where pupils achieve well from their individual starting points. The school has built well on the strengths in care, guidance and support evident in the last inspection, and these aspects are now exemplary. Problems or difficult circumstances are picked up early and addressed quickly to minimise any possible disruption to pupils' learning. The school's emphasis on pupils' personal development ensures good behaviour and consideration for one another. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Consequently, they feel safe. They say that they 'love it here' and enjoy playing with their friends at lunchtime. The curriculum is interesting and makes learning fun.

A key school strength is the consistency of teaching, which results in pupils making steady progress through the school. Their progress is monitored closely and prompt action is taken to identify learning difficulties or when a pupil is beginning to fall behind. The effectiveness of the action taken is shown in the good progress made by all ability groups, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language.

Children make a good start to school in Reception, including the development of their early literacy skills. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 is broadly average, and has improved since the last inspection, giving pupils a firm basis for later learning. The recent focus on the teaching of writing has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement in literacy. While their listening skills are not as well developed as those in reading and writing, their overall literacy skills are stronger than their numeracy skills. Pupils develop their understanding of number effectively through many practical activities in lessons, but do not have enough opportunities to consolidate them by applying their knowledge in everyday contexts. Parents and carers receive regular written information about the curriculum and school activities, and appreciate the school's open-door policy. However, they have few opportunities to discuss and develop their understanding of the school's approaches to teaching, for example of phonics (letters and sounds) or calculations.

The school is led well by the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher, supported well by middle leaders. Staff and the governing body know the school's strengths well, and plan for and bring about improvement effectively. For example, changes in staffing across the two schools have been managed well to bring in fresh ideas while maintaining existing strengths. The governing body uses school survey information to understand parents' and carers' views, although its members have few

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direct opportunities to listen to or address concerns at an early stage. Self-evaluation is systematic and accurate. Combined with the good record of improving pupils' attainment, this means that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment, by:
 - improving pupils' listening skills and levels of concentration
 - developing pupils' numeracy skills through application to real-life situations.

- Increase the involvement of parents and carers, by:
 - offering more activities for them to understand how to support their child's learning at home
 - developing a wider range of approaches for the governing body to listen to and understand parents' and carers' views.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children join the school with skills and understanding below the levels expected nationally for their age, and all groups make good progress in developing the basic literacy, numeracy and computer skills to prepare them well for the next stage of their education and later life. The work seen during the inspection and the school's data show that achievement has accelerated over the last two years, for example in the increasing number of pupils making very rapid progress and the proportion reaching the higher levels by the end of Year 2. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because work is appropriately practical and active and support staff challenge them to do as well as they can.

Pupils have an enthusiasm for learning and are confident young learners, ready to respond to teachers' questions and share their ideas. They present their work well. The vast majority show impressive levels of concentration, particularly when engaged in practical group tasks. However, a few find it challenging to retain their concentration when listening to their teacher or to one another. Adults manage this well, using a range of strategies to refocus pupils and to give additional support to develop listening skills, but overall this skill is not developed as well as speaking and writing. Pupils enjoy the wide range of activities planned for them. For example, they made rapid progress in developing their understanding of how to write clear instructions when they undertook a task in pairs, giving and following instructions to make a cheese sandwich. This became fun and learning was reinforced when mistakes were made, because the lack of precision in the instruction given resulted in strange shaped sandwiches rather than triangles. Pupils know exactly what they have to do next in their learning, and were seen referring to target cards to remind them of their areas for improvement at the start of a writing task. They respond well to the way adults illustrate learning. When shown pictures by David Hockney they enthusiastically applied the technique to create their own versions using photographs

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of themselves, effectively developing their understanding of art and practical skills.

Pupils’ relationships are characterised by kindness and respect for one another, reinforced consistently by adults in lessons and assemblies. When occasional incidents occur, pupils know exactly where to go for help and are confident that problems are resolved quickly. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to help one another, including as ‘helping hands’ or as part of the work of the ‘tidy team’. School councillors effectively represent the views of their classmates and share their views with adults about the school. Events including carol singing for older people and charity fundraising for Children in Need develop pupils’ understanding of the wider community and their place within it. Celebration of events such as Diwali and Hanukah develop pupils’ understanding of different cultures and faiths, but this aspect is not as strong as other areas of their personal development. The school’s effective promotion of health and fitness is seen in pupils’ good understanding of the benefits of sensible eating, many choosing to help themselves at the salad and vegetable bar. The lunchtime provides plenty of time for pupils to be active and many participate in additional physical activity through a wide range of sports clubs.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers’ good knowledge and attention to detail make an important contribution to the effectiveness of teaching. They plan interesting activities to ensure that pupils are engaged well by their learning, and only occasionally does the pace slow down. They use their thorough knowledge of pupils’ differing abilities and earlier attainment

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

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to target work closely to pupils’ needs so that learning is taken forward quickly. For example, in a lesson where pupils were developing their understanding of two- and three-digit numbers, the precise match of activities to the differing understanding of each group enabled pupils to move forward quickly. Generally, probing questioning helps pupils to think things through for themselves. Teachers use good-quality resources, including laminated information sheets with good examples of writing. Interactive whiteboards effectively illustrate learning. For example, a well-chosen video clip showing how Florence Nightingale influenced the development of hospital care absorbed pupils. Teachers work very effectively with teaching assistants, who are briefed well on their input within the lesson and help pupils to understand new concepts by clarifying explanations. Pupils’ work is marked well, often with helpful comments so that pupils gain confidence from their achievements.

The curriculum is based on a series of themes that capture pupils’ interest, promote academic achievement well and make a good contribution to pupils’ personal development. Teachers skilfully find ways for pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy and computer skills in different subjects. This is seen in the rich displays and records of pupils’ work around the school. There are few examples, however, of numeracy being used in meaningful everyday contexts. The school’s participation in a project to encourage visits is effectively broadening opportunities for pupils to learn in environments beyond the school.

Adults work hard to foster good relationships with all pupils and their families. Support for those whose circumstances make them vulnerable is extremely effective, and this has been extended well since the last inspection by sharing additional pastoral staff with the junior school. School procedures are clearly understood and regular training helps to ensure that these are implemented consistently. The school is tenacious in working with external agencies to ensure that pupils have the support they need when this lies beyond the resources or expertise within the school. The promotion of attendance has been particularly successful in reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The executive headteacher and staff have successfully ensured that the school has a positive, welcoming atmosphere. Staff morale is high and they are actively implementing detailed plans to address areas requiring further development. The

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well-organised governing body has a clear understanding of the school’s strengths and improvement priorities, based on good first-hand knowledge of the school’s everyday work. Teachers say that their involvement in monitoring has increased consistency of practice and raised their expectations of pupils’ achievements. Consequently, teachers have a strong sense of accountability for the progress of pupils in their class. Staff have embraced the opportunities provided by stronger links with the junior school. For example, better curricular continuity has been ensured by the changes made in the shared approaches to teaching addition. Teachers benefit from sharing expertise and pupils thoroughly enjoy opportunities such as reading with older pupils. Other valuable partnerships include those with care organisations such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, showing the school’s commitment to protecting and supporting pupils. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and embedded in the school’s work.

The school promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination well, and this is reinforced through an emphasis on responsibility and respect for the feelings of others. The link with a local special school was used to good effect in evaluating the school’s disability accessibility arrangements. The success of the use of information gained from monitoring pupils’ progress is seen in only marginal variations in the performance of different groups. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well together so that the school is a cohesive community where pupils are secure and safe. Links with two Chinese schools help pupils to develop their understanding of a different culture.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Well-organised induction systems and the positive links established with parents and carers help children settle quickly into school life. They quickly gain confidence because of good-quality care and support. Children attending The Wendy House are prepared well for joining Reception as they sometimes share facilities, which helps them to become familiar with the school surroundings. Children in The Wendy House really enjoy the range of activities, particularly in the stimulating outdoor area. The issues raised in its last report have been addressed well, although the impact that activities have on children’s learning is not always recorded sufficiently to share with parents and carers.

Children make good progress across the areas of learning. An emphasis on developing their limited speaking and listening skills helps them to express their thoughts and ideas. The wide range of activities, such as ‘word hunt’, role play and expressing their thoughts on their favourite characters following a story session, promotes children’s early literacy acquisition. Relationships between adults and children are positive and children freely express themselves to adults, who routinely help children to make imaginative use of language. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are included well in activities, for example through the effective use of hand signals. Frequent access to one-to-one activities with an adult makes sure that children of all abilities are challenged. High levels of staff support have a positive impact on children’s learning and behaviour, which are outstanding.

Children’s personal development is a key strength. Established systems, for example through roles as special monitors or making suggestions about equipment and activities outside, make a valuable contribution to developing an understanding of responsibility. Children’s health is promoted well, as seen when children excitedly dug up vegetables in ‘the garden’. The formal fruit snack time is used well to develop children’s social skills. Good leadership is evident in the way staff work well together and in focused planning for improvement, and reflected in the improvements in the outdoor area since the last inspection. Good relationships with The Wendy House staff help to ensure efficient use of resources and widen the range of experiences for the youngest children.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires were positive about all aspects of the school's work, and this was reflected in a number of supportive comments. They commented particularly on how staff are welcoming and listen to concerns, and how children enjoy school and make good progress. A few parents and carers raised concerns that behaviour is not managed well enough. Inspection findings show that pupils behave well and that any rare incidents of unacceptable behaviour are addressed quickly and robustly. A very small number of individual concerns raised were taken into account during the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Barnsole Infant 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 89 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 244 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	63	32	36	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	48	54	38	43	3	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	33	37	54	61	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	46	44	49	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	44	49	40	45	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	40	45	43	48	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	43	47	53	2	2	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)	31	35	42	47	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	38	43	48	54	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	33	45	51	9	10	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	30	50	56	4	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	38	43	50	56	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	50	56	38	43	1	1	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 8 April 2011 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.



24 November 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Barnsole Infant School, Gillingham, ME7 2JE

Thank you all very much for welcoming us to your school and showing us your work. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and hearing your thoughts about the school. We were impressed by your good behaviour and how you try to be kind to one another. You go to a good school and these are some of the positive things about it.

- You enjoy school and attend well.
- You get off to a good start in Reception or in The Wendy House.
- You feel safe and enjoy working and playing together because adults care for you exceptionally well.
- The school teaches you well and teachers plan interesting things for you to do.
- You work hard and learn well.
- You have a good understanding of how to be healthy and safe.
- Many of you care well for others, for example as helping hands or as members of the tidy team or school council.

The headteacher, staff and governing body work well together to make sure that the school continues to improve. To make it even better we have asked the teachers to give you more opportunities to practise your numeracy skills in real-life situations. We noticed that sometimes a few children do not concentrate well enough and have asked your teachers to find more ways for you to improve your listening skills. We have also asked staff to plan events for your parents and carers to look at how you learn, and for the governing body to hear their views.

You can help by continuing to do your best.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings
Lead inspector

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