

Bethersden Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	118372
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	379606
Inspection dates	21–22 May 2012
Lead inspector	Alison Cartlidge

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	112
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Monaghan
Headteacher	Kate Harper
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2009
School address	School Road Bethersden Ashford Kent TN26 3AH
Telephone number	01233 820479
Fax number	01233 820646
Email address	office@bethersden.kent.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	21–22 May 2012
Inspection number	379606



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012



Introduction

Inspection team

Alison Cartlidge

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed 14 lessons taught by five teachers. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at questionnaires from 68 parents and carers, 14 members of staff and 64 pupils. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, parents and carers, and pupils. The inspector heard pupils read, and looked at pupils' books, information on their progress, safeguarding information and other documents relating to planning and self-evaluation, presented by the school.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British, with a small minority coming from Gypsy and Traveller or other heritages. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The school has an above-average proportion of pupils who are supported by school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in one Reception class. There is a privately run playschool on the premises: this was not part of this inspection and is inspected separately. The school meets the current floor standards, which are the minimum standards expected by the government.

Nearly all members of teaching staff have changed since the last inspection, including senior leaders.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school that is improving rapidly, following a decline in pupils' progress immediately after the last inspection. It is not yet good because teaching and achievement are not consistently good. Leaders have improved the quality of information on pupils' progress, but have not ensured that any dips are tackled as soon as they arise. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement for most groups of pupils is satisfactory and rising. The teaching of phonics (sounds and letters) is having a positive impact on pupils' reading. However, pupils do not always use phonics to help with their developing skills in writing, including spelling. Progress in mathematics is inconsistent because there are missed opportunities for pupils to extend their mathematical knowledge and skills in other subjects. Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs make good progress. Pupils of Gypsy and Traveller heritage also achieve well.
- Teaching is satisfactory, with examples of effective teaching in all classes. Teaching is improving strongly because enthusiastic teachers provide interesting activities matched to pupils' differing needs. However, there are occasions when learning is too slow because teachers are not specific enough about what pupils are to learn or work is not challenging enough.
- Pupils behave well, have good attitudes to learning and feel safe. They are exceptionally supportive of each other in lessons. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well across the curriculum.
- The leadership of teaching through the management of performance is satisfactory as inconsistencies still remain. Leaders, including the governing body, understand what the school needs to do next to become good, and are demonstrating the capacity to improve in the way that they have improved teaching, behaviour and pupils' progress. Senior leaders provide clear guidance to staff and monitor teaching carefully.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rate of progress in writing and mathematics by September 2013, by:
 - ensuring pupils use their knowledge of phonics to support their spelling
 - providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to extend their mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Raise the quality of teaching to consistently good or better by April 2013, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - are specific about what pupils are to learn in each lesson
 - plan activities which are always challenging and are completed with a sense of urgency
 - give pupils greater guidance during lessons and more thorough marking in mathematics.
- By September 2013, make sure all leaders, including members of the governing body, use data on pupils' progress more rigorously so that dips in teaching and learning are tackled as soon as they arise.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment on entry varies from year to year, but the majority of children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage working within the levels expected for their age. They make at least satisfactory progress in the Reception class, and attainment on entry to Year 1 is broadly average. Children develop good communication, language and literacy skills. For example, they use their growing knowledge of letters and sounds to help them write plans for their early morning activities, and listen carefully to each other when reviewing what they have learnt.

In Years 1 to 6, pupils' progress is satisfactory and improving. Attainment is broadly average by the end of Years 2 and 6 in writing and mathematics and has risen to above average in reading. Pupils are making better progress in learning phonics and this is having a positive impact on their reading skills. For example, in Years 1 and 2, lower attaining pupils are confident and make positive comments such as, 'you sound the letters out' and 'you need to keep practising'. Progress is slower in writing and mathematics. Pupils do not always remember their phonics when spelling words and while pupils make good use of their literacy and information, communication and technology skills across the curriculum, some opportunities are missed for them to use mathematics, by, for example, making calculations and drawing graphs.

While most parents and carers believe that their children achieve well, inspection findings show that pupils' achievement is satisfactory because learning and progress vary between lessons and year groups. For example, in a challenging literacy lesson in Years 5 and 6, pupils extended their awareness of character traits and of how to deduce information from texts. In contrast, where learning is slower, pupils are not

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

given sufficiently challenging tasks or are not expected to work quickly enough throughout the lesson.

The needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are identified quickly and these pupils are supported well, enabling them to make good progress. The school is successfully narrowing any gaps between girls' and boys' writing, by providing boy-friendly topics. Pupils of Gypsy and Traveller heritage learn quickly because the school caters well for their specific needs.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The very large majority of parents and carers and their children believe that teaching is good. Inspection findings show that teaching is improving, and, while there are examples of effective teaching in all classes, it is not yet consistently good across all year groups, so its impact on pupils' progress is satisfactory. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, members of staff provide good support when working with small groups, and children progress well when making choices about their learning. For example, members of staff provide pupils with 'mini challenges' such as remembering words that begin with certain letters and testing the speed of cars on a slope. At times, progress slows when children are working independently on tasks that have been chosen for them by adults, because the activities do not always provide enough interest, or children need too much help to complete them.

Teachers in Years 1 to 6 have secure subject knowledge and provide tasks that interest and motivate the pupils. For example, in Years 1 and 2, pupils worked well in ability groups on learning how to tell the time, and pupils in Years 5 and 6 enjoyed making graphs representing the frequency of football players on collecting cards. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for different groups of pupils and homework has recently become more clearly focused. The school has successfully developed the quality of teachers' marking, especially in literacy, and the teaching of reading is good. Marking is not always sufficiently helpful to move pupils' learning forward in mathematics. Pupils are involved well in assessing their own learning, and paired activities are used well to increase pupil involvement. For example, in Years 4 and 5, pupils worked together well labelling angles, and in Years 3 and 4, pupils volunteered imaginative descriptions of the Blitz. However, teachers do not always ensure that pupils work with a sense of urgency, leaving insufficient time in some lessons for pupils to complete work or to evaluate their learning fully.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are given good encouragement and support and are taught well. Consequently, they make good gains in learning. The planned curriculum supports pupils' personal development well. Displays are attractive and celebrate diversity.

Teaching has a good impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are good relationships between members of staff and the pupils, supporting the development of positive social skills. Teachers' expectations and

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

management of behaviour are clear and consistent.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good over time. While a minority of parents and carers have misgivings about pupils' behaviour and about bullying, the vast majority of pupils say that behaviour is good and that instances of bullying are rare. For example, they make comments such as, 'Pupils are friendly most of the time' and 'Teachers tell us how to do the right things'. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and feel safe. In lessons, pupils work well in paired activities, provide each other with coaching and encouragement and are actively engaged in their learning. One pupil in a Years 5 and 6 class was heard giving helpful advice to another pupil by saying, 'Think about how the character acts' and another praised a classmate for making good use of alliteration.

Pupils are enthusiastic and make comments such as, 'I'm really interested when we pretend we are in the war' and 'I like everything about school'. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection and is now typically good, with few exclusions or serious incidents. Pupils are confident that occasional incidences of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with swiftly and effectively by all members of staff. Pupils say that they feel free from all kinds of bullying, including racism and cyber-bullying. They feel that they can talk to their teacher if they have any worries and that 'teachers sort things out for you'.

Pupils show respect for members of staff and each other. They are considerate towards one another and aware that everyone needs support from time to time. For example, pupils in Years 4 and 5 helped each other to make sensible choices when considering several dilemmas, and younger pupils appreciate the help they are given by peer mediators. The staggered start to the school day has helped pupils to arrive punctually and to be ready to learn straight away.

Leadership and management

Leaders, including members of the governing body, demonstrate they have the capacity to improve the school through the successful actions they have already taken to improve pupils' achievement. Remaining gaps in progress between groups of pupils are narrowing quickly. Areas identified for development by the previous inspection, such as meeting the needs of boys in literacy, have been tackled successfully, despite several changes in teaching staff. Pupils' behaviour, including attitudes towards learning, has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Recent initiatives, particularly with regard to teaching reading and phonics, are having a sustained and positive effect on pupils' progress in literacy, which is improving swiftly.

Performance management and professional development are moving teaching forward quickly, and teaching is now at least satisfactory or better across the school. Information on pupils' progress is now shared amongst all leaders and teachers, and

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

appropriate action is being taken to improve the school further. While areas of weakness are being dealt with, leaders are not yet ensuring that dips in attainment and progress are tackled as soon as they arise.

Equal opportunities are promoted and discrimination tackled competently. Pupils from different backgrounds are equally well supported and included in school life. The school is taking appropriate steps to eliminate any unevenness in learning and progress between groups, by providing further staff coaching and training as required. The school has established good relationships with most groups of parents and carers. Many parents and carers make positive comments such as: 'Bethersden school has a lovely community feel with an amazing, dedicated staff.'

The school's safeguarding arrangements, including vetting new appointments and up-to-date staff training, meet requirements. Pupils feel safe in school, and most parents and carers agree that this is the case. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. For example, in Years 5 and 6, pupils were impressed by the high numbers of Muslims who demonstrate their religious commitment by visiting Mecca, and in assembly, pupils were able to discuss the importance of love and friendship.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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).

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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.

23 May 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Bethersden Primary School, Ashford, TN26 3AH

I enjoyed coming to inspect your friendly school, talking with you about your work and hearing some of you read. Thank you for being so helpful during my visit. I found that your school provides you with a satisfactory education.

These are the best things about your school.

- You are making good progress in learning to read.
- Those of you who find learning difficult do well.
- You enjoy school and we agree with you that your teachers are kind and caring and work hard to make lessons interesting.
- Members of staff are good at teaching you all about how to behave sensibly and, as a result, you behave well.
- The headteacher, other leaders and the governing body know what needs to be done to make the school even better.

To help it improve, I have asked your school to make sure that teachers:

- help you to learn more quickly in writing and mathematics by making sure you use your phonics to help with your spelling, and by providing you with plenty of opportunities to improve your mathematics when you are working in other subjects
- are clear about what they want you to learn in each lesson, give you activities that are always challenging and are completed quickly, and make sure that their marking in mathematics always shows you how to improve.

I have also asked the senior staff to check more quickly in case any of you are not doing as well as you should, so that help can be provided straight away.

Thank you once again for telling me about your school and letting me see your work. You can help your teachers by remembering your phonics when spelling words.

Yours sincerely

Alison Cartlidge
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**