

Foster's Primary School

Westbrook Road, Welling, Bexley, DA16 1PN

Inspection dates 2–3 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils achieve well from their starting points. Their behaviour and positive attitudes to learning mean they are confident in starting their next schools.
- The most recent unvalidated national tests results for the oldest pupils are the best for some time.
- Children have a happy and secure start in the Nursery and they make good gains in their learning as they progress through the Reception classes.
- Pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are used well within other subjects, as are their number and writing skills.
- Those pupils who speak English as an additional language benefit from good levels of support, which enables them to achieve as well as others.
- Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and speak highly of the specific support their children receive.
- A clear determination by senior leaders and governors to remedy weaknesses from the previous inspection has resulted in the school's overall effectiveness improving. Pupils achieve better as teaching has improved and it is now typically good.
- Pupils say they feel safe, they like their teachers and know adults are quick to respond to their needs.
- The school fosters harmonious relationships between pupils from differing backgrounds.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although pupils are generally confident in their reading, not all are encouraged to read more demanding or challenging texts to enrich their reading skills.
- Pupils are keen to talk about their work and interests, although not always at length or by using a wide vocabulary.
- Pupils are not always given enough open-ended tasks in lessons and occasionally teachers' explanations are too long.
- Some activities do not always catch pupils' interest or use an investigative approach to enliven pupils' learning further.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons taught by 15 teachers, of which four were joint observations conducted with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors listened to a sample of pupils read in Year 2 and Year 6, and observed playtime and lunchtime routines. They observed two assemblies and met with a small number of parents and carers at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors held a meeting with a representative group of pupils, met with the vice chair and two members of the governing body, and held meetings with subject leaders and the phase coordinator for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Meetings were held with those responsible for the work relating to those who are disabled and those who have special educational needs and a meeting was held with a representative from the local authority.
- They took account of 36 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) survey and three written responses from parents and carers. They analysed questionnaires completed by 14 members of staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's monitoring and planning documentation, internal pupil progress information and records relating to behaviour and attendance, together with documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Kevin Hodge, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Elizabeth Cole

Additional inspector

Jameel Hassan

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is bigger than the average primary school and serves pupils from a wide area. Building work to add three new classrooms to the school has just started.
- The majority of pupils are White British, although around a quarter of pupils are from minority ethnic heritages, which is an average proportion. A slightly smaller than average proportion are at an early stage of learning to speak English, although 20 different languages are represented.
- A below average proportion are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding given to schools by the government). The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in national tests.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend pupils' learning and achievement in English through the school by:
 - extending pupils' confidence by reading a wider variety of more challenging texts to increase their skills and enjoyment further
 - developing the confidence of pupils to speak at length and with more variety in their vocabulary.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in order to accelerate pupils' learning so they make excellent progress by:
 - ensuring that, where appropriate, activities allow pupils to have more independence in their learning and that investigative activities have relevant and interesting starting points
 - ensuring that the most able pupils have more open-ended activities to stretch their thinking
 - making the introductions to lessons and explanations shorter so that pupils can get down to work more quickly and contribute more to discussions.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection, particularly in their basic language work such as learning letter sounds and combinations (phonics). The good start they have to school in the Nursery and Reception classes provides a good basis for developing children's number and language skills.
- Although children enter the school at slightly below those levels typically expected, they make up ground quickly, so by the time they leave the school they are confident writers and mathematicians. Reading has improved to good levels since the previous inspection for most pupils, as a focus on teaching phonics more effectively has been successful. Some pupils, however, would benefit from reading more challenging texts to extend their skills further.
- ICT skills develop systematically so pupils are confident to use a range of technology such as computers and other devices. For example, Year 4 pupils really enjoyed using microphones and cameras to record a report visually and orally on the effects of an imaginary tsunami incident.
- Pupils write with confidence and imagination, being able to recall and write about imaginary incidents such as a lorry fire or writing the script for a 'voice-over' on television. In mathematics, pupils are accurate in their calculation skills and knowledge of simple mathematical concepts such as perimeter and area. Occasionally however, some activities do not always fully exploit pupils' curiosity to find out more or to guide their own learning. Although pupils are willing to discuss their work and interests, not all are confident to use a wide vocabulary to enrich their explanations.
- Good levels of adult support, using materials and activities suited to their needs, enable those who are disabled or have special educational needs to make good progress within lessons and to achieve well. Pupils who are at early stages of learning English as an additional language benefit from similar support, so they feel confident and able to achieve as well as their classmates.
- Achievement across a broad range of subjects has also improved to good levels. Although not yet consistently the case in all classes, pupils' wider understanding of how to keep healthy for example, by investigating how to keep their teeth healthy and in making a healthy sandwich, is also broadening their understanding of simple scientific principles.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The school's close focus on monitoring of teaching quality to identify effective practice has helped to move it to typically good levels since the previous inspection. This is confirmed by both the school's and local authority's monitoring. Pupils readily testify to their enjoyment of lessons. There are still some variations however, and not all teaching is at the level of the very best. Occasionally, a small minority of lessons require improvement.
- Group work is a regular feature of lessons, where pupils discuss their work with their 'talk partners' to increase their understanding, although at times, teachers can spend too long in discussion or explanation, which slows pupils' pace of learning.
- Teachers use opportunities effectively to raise pupils' understanding of social, moral and cultural issues. For example, children in the Nursery and Reception classes learn the principles of what is right and wrong, and simple social conventions such as sharing. Older pupils in a Year 5/6 class enjoyed discussing the pros and cons of junk food promotion and advertising.
- In outstanding lessons, the pace of pupils' learning is high. Teachers make good use of technology and group work which encourages a 'hands-on' approach, and pupils are involved in assessing others' learning to good effect.
- Teachers use assessment routines effectively and, while not all pupils readily recall their targets to aid improvement, they refer to them by using their learning journals to jog their memory. They also self-assess regularly using simple codes to indicate levels of understanding.

Information on pupils' progress is used well to spot those pupils in need of extra help, particularly those who may be in danger of falling behind.

- While work is appropriately matched to the learning needs of most pupils, occasionally the most able pupils are not always stretched by having more open-ended questions to answer, and some activities for all pupils do not always start with an imaginative starting point to 'hook' pupils' interests.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs benefit from the early identification of their needs, well-planned group and individual tuition and close monitoring of their progress. Teaching assistants are adept at providing the right balance of support to pupils. This enables them to make good progress and achieve well, particularly those who are at the early stages of learning English.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are polite, courteous and kind to each other. Within lessons pupils readily listen, follow instructions and complete their work.
- Discussions with pupils indicated that they felt safe, listened to and that their concerns were addressed quickly.
- Good links with parents and carers, combined with good attention to welfare needs and routines, mean that children have a safe and secure start in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Incidences of bullying in any form are comparatively rare, and pupils themselves confirm that should it occur, it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Responses to the 'Parent View' online questionnaire highlighted high levels of satisfaction regarding pupils' enjoyment and happiness at the school.
- The school council is appreciated by fellow pupils and a clear set of values guides its work. Pupils enjoy their role in influencing improvement and fellow pupils liked the democratic way that pupils were elected to its membership.
- Younger pupils benefit from the help of Year 6 pupil chaperones who are given the status of being 'employed by the school'. This helps movement around the school to be smooth and largely trouble free.
- Pupils behave well within lessons, particularly those which engage the attention of pupils quickly. In a few, pupils tend to listen passively, rather than challenge each others' thinking or explore new ideas, particularly when activities are too predictable.
- A range of after-school clubs covering sporting, cultural or practical work helps broaden pupils' horizons. Many pupils in Year 6 spoke with eager anticipation about their forthcoming residential trip to France, looking forward to broadening their awareness and cultural understanding of others.

The leadership and management are good

- A concerted effort by senior leaders to improve aspects of the school's effectiveness following the previous inspection has been successful. New appointments at senior levels and well-focused professional development have helped strengthen the capacity of the school to improve further. The deployment of staff, particularly those who provide extra support and coaching to others, has been instrumental in raising the quality of teaching to typically good levels. Subject and phase coordinators are effective.
- Assessment routines provide a good range of information to monitor the progress of different classes and year groups effectively. The school makes good use of this information to provide the right level of adult support to match the learning needs of pupils, particularly those who may have fallen behind and need to catch up.

- School monitoring overtime reflects the inspection evidence that teaching is typically good, and regular, professional development has fostered the improvements found since the previous inspection.
 - The curriculum has strengths in the way that it is beginning to help staff plan more innovative activities, such as 'creative learning journeys'. However, this is not always a feature of day-to-day activities, where pupils are not always given enough independence in guiding their own learning and some activities do not capitalise upon pupils' natural curiosity.
 - Links with parents and carers, and the local community are good, reflected in the high levels of satisfaction noted in the online questionnaire (Parent View) and in a recent questionnaire conducted by the school.
 - The local authority has supported the school regularly and the allocation of a school progress adviser and training for governors has been instrumental in helping the school to improve since its last inspection.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved since the previous inspection and governors have a clear understanding and overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have analysed the use of extra money, known as the pupil premium, to ensure that pupils in the greatest need receive extra, well-targeted adult support.
 - They also ensure that discrimination of any sort is not tolerated and are active in ensuring that equal opportunities are maintained for all pupils whenever possible. Safeguarding routines are maintained to a high standard.
 - They support the school in a number of ways, not least in facilitating the addition of three, soon to be completed, extra classrooms. Governors visit the school at appropriate times and meet with staff regularly, although do not always record the outcomes of their visits systematically to help pinpoint initiatives which might be faltering or to identify common areas of success to help the school reach outstanding levels of effectiveness.
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What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	101451
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	400476

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	387
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Haddock
Headteacher	Bruce Fletcher
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 May 2012
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