

South Borough Primary School

Postley Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 6TL

Inspection dates

23–24 October 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching provided for the pupils and the quality of the marking of their work vary too much from class to class.
- The checks on teaching are not always accurate enough to identify precisely what needs to be improved.
- Standards are not as high in Years 3 to 6 as they should be, especially in mathematics and in writing.
- Not enough pupils reach the higher levels in their work, especially in mathematics. At times they do not have enough opportunities to discuss their ideas with someone else.
- The behaviour of pupils is not consistently good and some do not try hard enough with their work. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe.
- The newly-elected governing body is not yet knowledgeable enough to use information to challenge school leaders about how well the school is doing.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils do well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1 because teaching is good.
- The current senior leaders are beginning to tackle weaknesses. They are developing their roles well by working with teams of staff and focusing on planning and tracking progress.
- Reading is well taught and pupils speedily develop the skills to work out words they do not know.
- Pupils from all backgrounds are warmly welcomed and the school makes sure that those who need the most help get it.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons. Several of these were joint lesson observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Inspectors also listened to individual pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, the family liaison officer, the acting special educational needs coordinator and other staff with leadership responsibilities. Discussions took place with groups of pupils as well as with representatives of the governing body and of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 12 parents and carers as noted on the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and of responses to the staff questionnaire. They also noted the views expressed in the school's most recent parent survey and spoke to several parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring information, records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, and the minutes of the governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Sue Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alastair McMeckan

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- More pupils than is usual are known to be eligible for the pupil premium. This provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs identified at school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- About 25% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups with almost 20% speaking English as an additional language.
- An above-average proportion joins or leaves the school part way through their primary education.
- The school meets the government's floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 so that it is at least consistently good across the school by:
 - checking that staff use what they know about the progress pupils make to provide challenging work for all groups and particularly the more-able pupils
 - providing a wide range of opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas with a partner or adult
 - ensuring that the marking of pupils' work is consistent in identifying areas for improvement.
- Increase the rate of pupils' progress, especially in Key Stage 2, by:
 - ensuring that pupils develop their mental mathematics skills and the ability to solve problems accurately and speedily
 - checking that pupils develop their speaking skills to a higher level, are able to spell a wide range of words accurately, and that they present their work neatly.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that targets for improvement are prioritised and that senior leaders are clear about how these are to be achieved
 - making sure that the checking of teaching is thorough and clearly identifies areas for improvement
 - providing a programme of training for governors so that they are able to strengthen their role in supporting and challenging the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' rates of progress in Years 3 to 6 are too variable. Standards have often been below average. This was recognised by the local authority who during the last year provided additional support to the school. Standards have now started to rise, although there are still gaps in the learning of pupils at Key Stage 2.
- Although the gaps are narrowing between what the pupils achieve in the school and the achievement of pupils nationally, too few older pupils reach the higher levels in their work.
- Pupils often do better in English than in mathematics. Speaking skills remain a priority throughout their time in school because many do not use a wide range of words to describe what they think. Most pupils read accurately and many pupils write adequately although their spelling skills are variable and the presentation of their work is sometimes untidy.
- Pupils have a fair understanding of mathematics but are sometimes slow in their mental calculations. Some also lack the confidence to use what they already know to solve a range of mathematical problems.
- Tracking information on progress shows that girls have often done much better than boys. The school had identified this and taken action to eliminate the difference. Currently the progress they make is similar.
- The progress of pupils supported by the pupil premium, including those who are disabled and those with special educational needs, is similar to that of other pupils. The school makes effective use of these funds to provide additional staff to support pupils and the impact is seen in the good progress made in Year 6 mathematics. For example, lower-attaining pupils, in particular, developed a clearer understanding of how to estimate and accurately measure litres and millilitres.
- Children join the Nursery or Reception class with a range of skills that overall are below those expected for their age. This is particularly so in their ability to communicate with others. They make good progress, especially in the Nursery, where staff make it a priority to develop speaking skills.
- Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 in all areas of their learning, and standards are often above average at the age of seven.
- The number of pupils leaving and arriving at the school during the year affects the overall information on progress. A few arrive with little or no English whilst others have had several changes of school. They are all warmly welcomed and settle well because the school promotes equality of opportunity effectively. Some make rapid progress but do not always reach the levels expected for their age group at the end of Year 6. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language who are in school throughout their primary education achieve similarly to their peers.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because, while there has been improvement, it is still too variable. The proportion of good teaching has risen in the last year. There is now no teaching that is typically inadequate.
- Most staff often use assessment information soundly to set challenging tasks, but sometimes even more could be expected of the more-able pupils. Staff make good use of questioning to check what pupils know, but they occasionally miss the opportunity for pupils to discuss their ideas further and extend their vocabulary.
- The marking of pupils' work has also improved but is not yet entirely consistent in identifying exactly what works well and where further improvement can be made.
- Teaching is particularly effective in Years 1, 4, 6 and in the Nursery. For example, pupils in Year

4 made excellent progress in their story writing because expectations were high, time limits were set for tasks and questions were used very effectively to probe other ideas. Pupils were then encouraged to check each other's work and, as a result, were able to explain what else could be improved.

- Throughout the school, staff have strong working relationships with the pupils. They value their ideas and offer lots of praise to raise their self-esteem. The management of pupils is consistently good and ensures a calm and purposeful working environment in all classes.
- The school has recently been successful in recruiting skilled and enthusiastic staff, including newly qualified teachers. The planning of lessons is better than previously and identifies linked tasks for pupils of different abilities.
- Support staff are used well to help groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Some higher level teaching assistants provide good challenge to different groups, helping them to make greater progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour overall requires improvement because when pupils are not closely supervised, including at lunchtime, it is not good. Some pupils show they have limited awareness of others. This leads, for example, to a lot of noise in the dining hall and behaviour and table manners that require improvement.
- A few pupils, including some who find learning difficult, do not always join in discussions and therefore do not develop their speaking skills as well as they could. Similarly, the presentation of pupils' work is variable, with a few taking little care to ensure their spelling is accurate or that their writing is neatly presented.
- Discussions with pupils show they have an adequate understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. The number of temporary exclusions has fallen significantly during the year, although in the on-line questionnaire a few parents and carers indicated that they do not believe behaviour is good.
- The majority of pupils are polite and courteous and their behaviour is good when they are closely supervised by staff. This is particularly shown in the most effective lessons where pupils have positive attitudes to their learning.
- Pupils understand the positive and negative aspects of using computers and their responsibilities when using the internet or mobile phones. They recognise different types of bullying and are confident that if they raise concerns these are acted upon as the school makes clear that bullying is not tolerated.
- The attendance of pupils has improved and is now just above national averages. The school has worked successfully with families to stress the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because there is a mixed picture of effectiveness of leaders across the school. While there has been considerable development of the senior leadership team, key staff and governors still do not always have a clear enough focus on the school's priorities.
- With several changes of staff in the last year, there is now a clearer emphasis on working as a team and moving forward. A stronger lead in improving teaching is occurring and is well supported by effective key stage leaders working with small teams of staff teaching different age groups. The school now has the capacity to improve further.
- The local authority provided effective support to the school last year especially at Key Stage 2. Skilled specialist teachers worked successfully with the staff to identify how assessment of pupils' work could be improved and used more effectively to help teachers plan lessons. This led

to an improvement in the overall quality of teaching and the eradication of inadequate teaching.

- Subject leaders are rapidly improving the effectiveness of their work, including the leadership of mathematics. The strong focus on this subject is supporting improvement well, although some aspects have been recently introduced and have not yet had an impact. There are adequate opportunities for staff to attend additional training activities.
 - The school recognises it requires further improvement and correctly identifies the key priorities to raise standards further. The checking of the work of the school has been weak in the past and has not identified the weaknesses in teaching and the areas for further improvement well enough. This has been strengthened recently through the growing involvement of senior staff.
 - The school has improved performance management procedures which hold the staff increasingly to account for the progress made by pupils. The links to pay awards are appropriate.
 - The school's curriculum meets the needs of most pupils and promotes equality and helps tackle discrimination. The school takes pride in the several awards it holds in environmental areas, although at times too much attention has been given to special initiatives at the expense of basic literacy and numeracy skills.
 - The pupil premium funding is used appropriately. School leaders are currently paying more attention to the impact its use has on progress.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted through the curriculum with opportunities for pupils to learn about their own and other cultures. Pupils have many good opportunities to work with others and develop their social skills and self-confidence.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The newly elected governing body does not yet have an accurate enough understanding of how effective the school is. This is because the governors focus upon behaviour and care for pupils rather than on the progress made. The governing body recognise that members need further training to develop the skills to hold the school to account for the standards achieved. They ensure that current safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
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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	118305
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	401739

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	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cliff Heasman
Headteacher	Caroline Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 May 2010
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