

North Borough Junior School

Peel Street, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 2BP

Inspection dates 14–15 November 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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- There is not enough good or better teaching to ensure that all pupils make good progress from their starting points, especially for the more able and particularly in Year 3.
- Achievement in English, particularly in writing, is significantly below that in mathematics, despite recent changes to subject plans.
- Leaders and managers do not make effective use of information on how pupils learn in order to plan the next steps for all groups of pupils.
- The governing body does not have an elected chairperson. It is not always as well informed as it could be in order to fully understand the work of the school or to question any area of weakness.

The school has the following strengths

- The assistant headteachers provide excellent role models as teachers and as leaders. Work done by the subject leader to raise standards in mathematics continues to improve learning.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress because extra support provided for them is at the right level.
- The broad range of experiences that are planned for pupils improve their achievement and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils feel safe, behave well and show very positive attitudes to learning and good manners.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with half a day's notice and took place over two days.
- Inspectors held meetings with staff, groups of pupils, the Acting Chair of the Governing Body, a community governor, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the school's improvement plans; the school's information on pupils' current progress; reports on teaching; pupils' workbooks; questionnaires completed by 13 staff; and documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 21 lessons, two of which were joint observations with the headteacher, and a few short visits to lessons and special needs groups. They also listened to individual pupils read.
- An inspector met some parents and carers informally at the start of the school inspection. There were eight responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Angela Konarzewski, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Elson	Additional Inspector
Carol Vant	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized junior school.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background.
- About one third are from ethnic minority groups, which is an above-average proportion.
- A significantly above average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action plus and with a statement is above average, while the proportion supported at school action is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for extra funding because of disadvantage (known as pupil premium) is also above average.
- Half of the teachers in the school took up their post in September 2012 and were not at the school at the time of the last inspection.
- The school meets the current floor standard which sets the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, particularly in one Year 3 class, so that it is all good or better by September 2013 by ensuring that:
 - there is an effective support programme to develop teachers' skills and subject knowledge
 - all teachers provide a high level of challenge, especially for the most able in reading and writing
 - all teachers maintain high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - all teachers plan more opportunities for pupils to increase the responsibility they take for their own learning
 - teaching assistants are effectively deployed in lessons, especially during lesson introductions.
- Raise achievement in English, especially in writing, to match that in mathematics by ensuring that work is interesting and is set at the right level to provide suitable challenge for all pupils.
- Improve the impact of school leaders by:
 - ensuring that the monitoring and evaluation of the progress of all groups of pupils is thorough
 - evaluating the impact of funding for disadvantaged pupils on their achievement
 - developing the skills, knowledge and understanding of the governing body so that the members can understand the work of the school and question any area of weakness.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because, given their starting points, not enough pupils make good progress in English and especially in writing.
- By the end of Year 6 pupils reach standards which are better than all pupils nationally in mathematics, but standards in English, although they are above the national average, are not as high. This is because pupils are not always challenged and work is not always set at the right level for different groups of pupils.
- Progress reflects the quality of teaching and so varies throughout the school. Boys tend to achieve more highly than girls in mathematics and girls more highly in English, but the school has not either identified or addressed these issues.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, together with those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress, especially in mathematics, because their work is at the right level. Disadvantaged pupils who receive extra funding make better progress than their peers nationally, but they do not do as well as other pupils in the school because the funding is not being used effectively to offer them specific support with their education.
- Progress in reading is not rapid enough because older pupils have not been taught to link letters and sounds with precision and accuracy, so they find it difficult to read words they do not know. On the other hand, younger pupils entering the school in Year 3 show a secure knowledge and understanding of linking letters and sounds for reading and so they have the capacity to make better progress.
- Parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View, consider that their children are making good progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching typically requires improvement because it does not consistently promote good achievement.
- Although the assistant headteachers model and deliver some excellent teaching and more than half the teaching observed during the inspection was at least good, there were too many lessons where teaching observed required improvement and some where it was inadequate, especially in one Year 3 class. This leads to pupils making inconsistent progress across the school.
- Where marking and feedback give pupils clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their work, pupils make good progress, especially in mathematics. For writing, this process is beginning to have a positive impact, especially where opportunities to practise writing skills are being applied across the curriculum, for example in the Year 6 history topic on the Second World War. However, this is not always the case.
- In lessons where pupils are given regular opportunities to discuss responses to open-ended questions with a partner, they enjoy taking part and benefit from the opportunity to clarify their ideas. This ensures that they make good progress in their understanding and improve their speaking and listening skills.
- In most of the literacy lessons seen, the same tasks were set for the whole class. Lower ability pupils were usually well supported by teaching assistants and so they made good progress, but higher ability pupils were often unchallenged, especially in their written tasks.
- The school's focus on improving sentences is having a positive impact on writing, particularly for lower ability pupils. For example, a lower ability set enjoyed working together to turn 'the car went down the road' into 'the gleaming, red Ferrari zoomed violently down the road'.
- In some classes, there is an over reliance on the use of published worksheets and this limits pupils' creativity and independence. Pupils, particularly in Year 3, lose interest and complete their work in a very slapdash way and some let their attention wander.

- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are given extra support in lessons. Sometimes they work in small groups with teaching assistants to practise their skills and this helps them to make good progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are also well catered for and consequently make good progress.
- Although teaching assistants are generally well deployed in support of pupils who are completing set tasks, they sometimes waste time by listening passively to lesson introductions.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The majority of pupils behave very well in lessons where they are very attentive, even when teaching is not at the right level.
- Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for, and that rare cases of misbehaviour are dealt with effectively by adults in the school. Parents indicate that they are happy that the school provides a safe environment and that behaviour is good.
- Year 6 pupils interviewed said that incidents involving bullying are rare. They have a very good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber bullying, because every child in the school has signed an anti-bullying pledge. Pupils were also able to recall the anti-bullying messages received in a recent show presented by a theatre group.
- Older pupils enjoy a range of responsibilities to help adults ensure that all children are safe and happy at playtimes, including peer mentors, prefects and door monitors.
- Pupils are exceptionally courteous and well mannered towards each other and towards adults, holding doors open and giving welcoming smiles. In this area, they exemplify the school's motto, 'To be the best we can be'.
- Pupils' rates of attendance have improved and are above average because the school has worked effectively with parents to reduce absences and pupils clearly enjoy coming to school.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. This is because senior leaders and managers have not been effective in ensuring that the education provided by the school has been of a good enough standard to ensure all pupils consistently make good progress in their learning, especially in English, in all year groups.
- The school has performance management procedures in place which hold teachers to account for pupils' progress. However, measures taken to address weak teaching have not yet been fully effective. The headteacher's evaluation of teaching and learning usually shows insight into strengths and weaknesses, but she is sometimes reluctant to give required feedback on areas for development because she is very caring towards her staff.
- The assistant headteachers, appointed by the headteacher, demonstrate excellent teaching and leadership skills and provide good role models for other staff, half of whom are new to the school. Good leadership and management of the provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and for pupils who speak English as an additional language, ensure that these pupils make good progress.
- The vast majority of staff who completed the questionnaires were very positive about the school. One wrote, 'The team ethos here is very strong as is our place within the community. The children really are at the heart of everything we do.'
- Modifications to the curriculum in mathematics have been embedded and ensure good progress. Recent adjustments to the English curriculum have yet to demonstrate the desired impact. Mathematics and literacy skills are starting to be well promoted through creative curriculum topics and in science. Further enrichment is provided through visits and additional activities including a variety of clubs. All of this demonstrates that the school has the capacity to secure improvement.

- Well-planned opportunities promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively, for example in special assemblies such as one about UNICEF and children in Africa. In another assembly, based on Remembrance Day, every child made a red tissue poppy in remembrance, which was suspended from the hall ceiling.
- The school effectively promotes tolerance and understanding of cultural differences. Close links with the neighbouring Ghurkha regimental barracks provide opportunities for pupils to learn about army life and the world beyond the locality.
- Partnerships with parents are limited, as evidenced in the very small response to Parent View, in spite of the school's concerted efforts. This means that most parents are unable to become part of their children's learning or offer their support.
- The school has received effective local authority support through the Kent Challenge programme.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body requires improvement and needs the appointment of an elected chairperson. It has not had the appropriate training to understand and interpret information and equip its members with the right level of knowledge and understanding to ask searching questions about the school's level of overall provision or its comparative performance in relation to similar schools. Although governors carry out correct procedures for managing the headteacher's performance, they are not fully informed about the arrangements for managing the performance of other staff or about the quality of teaching in the school. Consequently, they are not involved in recognising and rewarding good teachers, nor are they fully aware of what is being done to tackle underperformance. Although the budget is well managed through the finance committee, expenditure of the pupil premium has not been checked to see whether it is having the desired impact on the education of disadvantaged pupils. Governors have ensured that safeguarding requirements are fully met.

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	118301
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	405759
Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	266
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Sime
Headteacher	Christine Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 July 2011
Telephone number	01622 754708
Fax number	01622 200002
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