

Barming Primary School

Belmont Close, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 9DY

Inspection dates

24–25 January 2013

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		Require improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' achievement has been too variable since the last inspection because teaching has not been strong enough for pupils to make consistent progress through the school.
- Pupils' progress is now checked frequently and action taken promptly to address difficulties, but in the past the information was not used well enough so that some pupils still have gaps in their understanding.
- Clear expectations for teaching are improving its quality. While teachers are developing their skills and understanding of school policy, there are still some lessons which require improvement.
- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average. Attainment in writing is lower than in reading and mathematics.
- Leaders and managers have introduced a number of policies, including for handwriting and presentation, but these are not being used in all classes across the school.
- Teachers do not always expect enough of pupils in lessons so that sometimes when pupils finish work quickly, follow-up work is not sufficiently challenging.
- Marking identifies well what pupils have achieved but does not always identify the next steps pupils should take to improve.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is improving because of the focus the leadership team and governing body have brought to improving teaching and pupils' progress.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in school.
- Mathematics standards are improving quickly because the teaching of the subject has been strengthened.
- Reading is promoted well across the school, and pupils enjoy reading independently in the class libraries.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed significant parts of 21 lessons involving all teachers teaching at the time of the inspection, including two jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Inspectors listened to a sample of pupils read.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the Governing Body, local authority, staff and a group of pupils.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, attended assemblies, and scrutinised pupils' work, progress data, evaluation and development documents, safeguarding information, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and minutes of the Governing Body meetings.
- Inspectors took account of 61 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), together with written comments from six parents and questionnaires completed by 14 staff.

Inspection team

Helen Hutchings, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gianni Bianchi	Additional Inspector
Barbara Saltmarsh	Additional Inspector
Carol Vant	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Barming Primary School is larger than most primary schools, with more boys than girls.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage, with a number of other backgrounds represented in low numbers. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government for pupils eligible for free school meals, looked-after children and children from service families) is below the national average and has increased significantly since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of pupils with disabilities and those who are supported at school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is low.
- More pupils join or leave the school at times other than into the Reception class or Year 1 than is found nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school occasionally uses specialist alternative provision, but currently there is none.
- There have been a number of staffing changes since the last inspection, including four new teachers in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is good or better and raises achievement for all pupils by:
 - building on the existing strengths in teaching in the school as a model to share best practice
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve by making sure that work is sufficiently challenging for all, and that each group is clear about exactly what is expected in the time given
 - ensuring that marking identifies clear steps for improvement and that pupils are routinely given time in lessons to correct and improve their work.
- Ensure that leaders and managers use their checking of pupils' progress alongside their checks on teaching to bring consistency to:
 - identifying pupils who are not doing as well as they should and making sure that the additional support they are given is effective in filling gaps in their knowledge and understanding
 - how well checks on pupils' progress are used to help pupils to monitor their own progress more effectively
 - developing pupils' fluency in handwriting and the presentation of their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement is not yet good enough because results in the Year 6 national tests are too variable and pupils do not make consistent progress through the school. In 2012, results fell to below average because pupils had not made the progress of which they were capable.
- Pupils are now working at levels similar to those expected nationally, particularly in the upper stages of Key Stage 2. As they develop confidence in their learning, particularly in basic literacy and numeracy skills, pupils' progress accelerates. Consequently, pupils now in Year 6 have made good progress from their starting points at the end of Key Stage 1, but some younger pupils are still making up ground lost because their progress was not fast enough.
- There is considerable variation in children's capabilities in different year groups, but children generally start school in Reception class with skills and knowledge typically expected for their age. They make expected progress and start Year 1 broadly in line with national levels.
- The teaching of reading ensures that pupils develop a love of books. However, younger pupils sometimes lack the confidence to apply their understanding of letters and sounds and do not always fully understand what they are reading. This slows their progress in writing and holds them back when researching information for themselves. The lack of fluency in pupils' handwriting slows down their ability to record their thoughts quickly.
- A focus on improving mathematics since the last inspection has effectively improved pupils' achievement, so that mathematics attainment is in line with that in reading and better than that in writing.
- Groups of pupils, including boys and girls, progress at similar rates. A number of new initiatives have been introduced to give those finding learning difficult additional support at an earlier stage than previously. These are proving effective in boosting rates of progress. As a result, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs progress at similar rates to their peers.
- In the past, some pupils who changed schools did not make enough progress from their Key Stage 1 starting points. Now that action is taken more quickly to address the gaps in the knowledge of all pupils, the attainment gap between different groups is reducing, including for those who join the school during Key Stage 2.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively for additional tuition, either one-to-one or in small groups, and to ensure full participation in school life such as supplementing school trips or having access to electronic books through the library club. The gap in performance between this group and their peers as measured by their average points score in assessments at the end of Year 6 is reducing.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is improving and there is good and outstanding teaching, and none that is inadequate. However, there is not yet enough good or better teaching to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Teachers have strengthened the school's approach to teaching writing since the last inspection, ensuring that pupils develop their spelling, grammar and punctuation progressively. Pupils are required to apply these skills in a range of situations which makes writing relevant and interesting. However, the teaching of handwriting is not given enough priority for pupils to develop their abilities quickly, particularly for those finding writing difficult, and this has a negative impact on the presentation of their work and sense of personal achievement.
- Pupils' progress is checked more often than previously and teachers use this information to plan work matched to pupils' earlier achievements. However, in some lessons, the tasks given to pupils are too easy. On occasion, teachers do not give pupils precise instructions about the different outcomes expected of each group or require pupils to write at greater length.
- The introduction of short mental mathematics sessions is having a positive impact on helping pupils to develop quick recall of number bonds. Pupils are enthusiastic and apply their skills well

in investigative work, seen in a Year 5 lesson when pupils linked their understanding of area and perimeter to find the size of the largest field given a limited length of fencing. A similar example where pupils thought things through for themselves took place when Year 6 pupils developed their own experiments to understand friction. The task grabbed their attention because the teacher had made it relevant by using ice as the basis for the practical work following up on the snow fall earlier in the week.

- The most effective teaching quickly engages pupils and gives them opportunities to talk through their ideas. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils developed their understanding of the features of writing in comics well because the frequent use of partner talk and role-play involving 'Spiderman' gave them opportunities to articulate their thinking.
- Teachers are using the new marking policy to identify the strengths of pupils' work and what needs further improvement. However, in some cases, improvement points are not clear enough about which small steps will make the greatest difference, and time is not routinely set aside for pupils to respond to teachers' comments and to undertake additional tasks in order to improve their work.
- Similarly, although pupils have progress grids giving the requirements for different levels of work, such as in their mathematics books, these are not used consistently to help them to understand how to move their work on quickly.
- Teaching assistants are well trained, and because they are carefully briefed by the teacher, play an important role in supporting individuals and groups of pupils.
- Information and communication technology skills are promoted well, for example seen in the celebration assembly when Year 2 pupils gave a presentation about their work on the properties of materials. Pupils are very enthusiastic to work independently on the new computer programmes to boost their numeracy skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, and this is reflected in the school's records of behaviour over time. It is not yet outstanding because, on occasion, pupils become distracted when they do not find the work challenging or have to wait to be given additional work.
- Pupils say that bullying is very rare. They know the difference between bullying and falling out, and have a good understanding of cyber-bullying because this is dealt with openly in personal development lessons. When incidents of unacceptable behaviour occur, they are dealt with quickly and efficiently.
- Pupils take on responsibility well, for example, managing music for school assemblies or as peer mediators, which helps them to develop leadership skills.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are warm, as they are between pupils themselves, which ensures a school climate which challenges any form of discrimination and fosters teamwork. Older pupils are good models for younger children, for example helping them to read and as buddies in the playground.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school and their security within it are reflected in above-average attendance. An increase in absence last year was challenged robustly by the school, and the effective additional support provided for families has resulted in a significant improvement in attendance this year.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership and management are not yet good because, although the pace of development has increased over the last year, the number of staffing changes since the last inspection has slowed down senior leaders' plans for improvement. It has taken time for staff new to the school to

understand and become familiar with the school's systems.

- The headteacher and leadership team have an accurate view of the school and what needs further improvement. The new ways of teaching introduced over the last year are beginning to have a positive impact. However, while teachers are developing their skills and understanding of the school's expectations, there are inconsistencies in how policies are being implemented, such as sharing progress grids with pupils to help them check what they have to do to reach the next level.
 - The questionnaire returns from staff were positive and staff are enthusiastic about the changes being made. The parental questionnaire and comments indicate that the majority are supportive of the school and are happy with its provision.
 - Performance management arrangements are robust. Staff are set challenging targets, closely linked to pupils' progress and to teachers' progression through the pay scales. Teachers find the weekly training programme helpful, and this has resulted in a strong learning community within the school. The work with local authority advisers has contributed well to improvements, including advice on teaching approaches and creating a more effective outdoor area for Reception children.
 - Leaders regularly check the effectiveness of teaching on pupils' learning and have increased the frequency of progress checks. This means that the school now picks up more quickly when an individual pupil needs additional help and support, and the range of programmes to boost pupils' progress has been broadened. Senior leaders are checking the impact of these interventions and, although it is still early days, they appear to be helping pupils to catch up more quickly than previously.
 - The curriculum gives pupils a wide range of learning opportunities, both within the classroom and beyond, which promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities and special events adds to pupils' enjoyment of school.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved since the last inspection and governors have undertaken training to help them to develop their roles so that they have a good first-hand knowledge of the school to inform their strategic decision making. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses, including the quality of teaching and how this relates to pay progression, and hold the headteacher and senior leaders to account for the school's performance. They understand the data relating to pupils' achievement and how this compares with schools nationally. They approved the spending of funding to support pupils eligible for the pupil premium to include additional staffing for intervention programmes and electronic books, with the intention of helping pupils to accelerate their progress. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and give no cause for concern.
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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	118508
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	405776

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
Number of pupils on the school roll	411
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Adams
Headteacher	Robin Halls
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 March 2011
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