

Birkbeck Primary School

Alma Road, Sidcup, DA14 4ED

Inspection dates 12–13 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- The standards pupils reach by the time they leave school are above the expected levels for English and mathematics.
- Progress in reading, writing and mathematics is good.
- Most pupils learn well in lessons due to the good support they receive from adults.
- The headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher know the school well and plan actions carefully to improve teaching and raise attainment.
- Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and use their experience to ask challenging questions to help the school improve further.
- Senior leaders monitor teaching and check that teachers are helping pupils to do their very best.
- The creative and thematic teaching of subjects enables all groups of pupils to learn exceptionally well about the wider world.
- Pupils feel safe and are confident that any bullying is dealt with.
- Parents and carers are very pleased that their children are happy and looked after at school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teaching and learning are not typically outstanding because marking does not give pupils enough guidance on how to improve their work.
- Questioning by adults does not extend pupils' thinking enough and pupils are not enabled to learn for themselves through open-ended tasks.
- Not all groups of pupils are making rapid and sustained progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 35 full and part lessons, of which two were joint observations, and had learning walks with the headteacher and acting deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and other members and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents and carers from 94 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and met some parents and carers informally at the start of the school day.
- The views of 18 staff who returned questionnaires were taken into account.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the school’s self-evaluation; the school’s development plan; the school’s data for tracking pupils’ progress; work in pupils’ books; monitoring files; behaviour and attendance records; minutes of the governing body meetings; and the documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors also heard a selection of pupils read in Years 1, 2 and 3 and held a meeting with pupils chosen at random.

Inspection team

Pervina Saunders, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Barbara Breed

Additional Inspector

Gill Walley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average size primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is below that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is lower than the national average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Not all children from the Nursery transfer into the Reception classes. Therefore approximately one third of the Reception intake is from other settings.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Since the last inspection the headteacher has retired and the deputy headteacher has been promoted to headteacher. There has also been some staffing change due to staff moving on for promotion and maternity leave.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is typically outstanding by making sure that:
 - marking clearly guides pupils in the next steps in their learning, enables them to practise the guidance given and is then followed up in subsequent marking
 - questioning by teachers and teaching assistants provides the challenge to fully extend pupils' thinking
 - all pupils actively apply the skills they have learnt in open-ended tasks so that they can learn for themselves.
- Increase the rate at which pupils make progress by:
 - making sure all planned activities are at the right level and that they challenge pupils and enable them to achieve exceptionally well over a sustained period.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics by the time they leave the school is generally above average, although it has declined over time from being well above. However, current school data and work in pupils' books show that attainment is now improving again and this is due to the improvement in teaching. The current Year 6 pupils are on track to reverse the decline in test results that occurred in 2012.
- Current progress is generally good in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school. However, the proportion of pupils exceeding national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is still not high enough. To improve this, for example in writing, the school has introduced a longer writing session in which the pupils explore a range of skills before attempting a longer piece of work. This is helping to increase pupils' attainment and progress in writing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs mostly achieve well because their targets are closely monitored and they receive focused support from skilled teaching assistants. However, not many achieve exceptionally well.
- The achievement of pupils that are known to be eligible for the pupil premium has been variable over time. Some of the pupil premium funding has been used to provide these pupils with extra support and carefully targeted interventions during the past year and so they are now making good progress. They are catching up with other pupils but there is still a gap of eight months in attainment in English and mathematics.
- Pupils from minority ethnic heritages and those that speak English as an additional language are achieving well compared to their peers.
- Boys are performing as well as the girls where the teaching engages them and they are motivated to learn. The school has introduced activities into the curriculum themes to enthuse the boys. For example, when teaching about the seaside an aspect of 'being pirates' is now included.
- The number of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 screening check for sounds that letters make (phonics) was below the national figure in 2012. Pupils that were below the expected level have had focused interventions by experienced teaching staff and most have now reached the expected level.
- School data indicate that this year more pupils in Year 1 are attaining the expected standard. When hearing pupils read inspectors found that pupils were able to apply their knowledge of the sounds that letter make very well.
- Children joining the Nursery have skills and abilities at below the levels typically seen for their age in most areas, particularly in physical development and language and communication. They make good progress during their time in the Nursery and in the Reception Year due to the excellent engaging curriculum. Their attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is broadly that expected for their age.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good because teachers at the start of lessons refer to previous learning and make clear to pupils what they expect them to achieve. They then reinforce this during the lessons.
- Teachers listen and observe pupils carefully and give good verbal feedback to pupils when they are working on a task. This helps pupils to successfully improve their work.
- Teachers have high expectations and plan lessons which enable pupils to apply knowledge and skills learnt in other subjects. For example in a mathematics lesson on coordinates pupils were encouraged to make links with the maps in the class reading book, *Kensuke's Kingdom*.
- Pupils are encouraged to give feedback to each other on their work as well as checking their own work against clear learning goals.

- Relationships are good and all groups of learners cooperate well with each other. Pupils generally participate well in whole-class sessions but some lose interest when the session lacks pace and is not very creative.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use question and answer sessions to assess pupils' understanding. They do not yet use questioning to challenge and fully extend pupils' thinking.
- There is a strong desire for equality of opportunity and teaching enables all groups of pupils to succeed.
- In the most effective teaching, teachers carefully plan tasks at the right level for the different ability groups and challenge the pupils so that they make rapid progress. For example, in a Year 6 writing lesson, work on improving sentences was carefully pitched for all groups; some groups were challenged to expand the sentences by using elaborate descriptive vocabulary while others were carefully supported, by a teaching assistant, to complete simple descriptive sentences.
- Where teaching is less effective the work planned for the different groups does not enable the pupils to make rapid progress because it is either too easy or too difficult.
- Support staff provide good support to pupils in lessons and they are particularly effective in enabling disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those eligible for the pupil premium to make progress and feel valued.
- Teachers consistently mark the pupils' work, praise what has been achieved and point out how pupils can improve their work. However, their feedback does not always help the pupils to practise the points made and teachers do not check that the pupils are consistently applying the guidance given.
- Some teaching is over directed by adults and does not allow pupils to experience learning for themselves because they do not have the opportunity to be more actively involved in attempting more challenging open-ended tasks.
- Teaching is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The environment is well organised and stimulating. The children are keen to engage in the challenging activities planned for them both inside and outside the classroom.
- Activities planned are linked to children's interests and assessments. For example, different role play areas such as a building site and a doctors' surgery are set up because the boys showed interest in these. Pupils are enabled effectively to develop writing skills through a range of cross-curricular activities.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils take pride in their school and are positive about their learning.
- Staff manage the behaviour of pupils well by following the clear behaviour systems in place.
- Pupils are generally engaged and well behaved in lessons. However, when the pace of the lesson is slow some pupils lose their concentration, become inattentive and start to fiddle with things.
- Pupils are respectful and courteous and no inappropriate behaviour was seen during playtimes. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well with each other. The behaviour records seen by inspectors also indicate that this is typical behaviour and that the school tackles any discrimination effectively.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying. They say that bullying is rare and they know that if there is any it will be followed up immediately.
- There have been no exclusions in last three years, however there has been one fixed-term exclusion this year.
- Most of the parents and carers that responded to the Parent View questionnaire or spoke to inspectors said that their children are happy in school and feel safe and well looked after.
- Pupils are very positive about school and this is reflected in the above-average attendance and very few long-term absences.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They understand the risks of

using some internet sites and understand issues related to personal safety, such as crossing the road and using drugs.

- Behaviour is not outstanding because there is not enough active learning and pupils are not yet self-disciplined in managing their own behaviour and attitudes to learning.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have high expectations of teaching and learning and have tackled any inadequacies well.
- Teaching is improving, following some instability, because new staff have been provided with appropriate support and training. For example, teaching staff have benefited from training which has enabled teachers to work in groups of three to share good practice and improve their teaching.
- The headteacher and senior leaders manage the performance of teachers effectively by checking the quality of teaching. In pupil progress meetings they challenge staff to make good or better progress for all groups of learners. For example, this year there has been a focus on improving progress made by middle-ability pupils by teachers working with these pupils during group-work sessions.
- Subject leaders are enthusiastic about their subjects. They have action plans linked to the school development plan and carry out monitoring activities. However, not all subject leaders are checking thoroughly that pupils are doing as well as they can in their subject.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the action plans in the school development plan are linked closely to it. For example, there is a clear focus on improving teaching to outstanding and improving the skills of middle leaders so that they are able to judge levels of achievement in their subjects.
- Staff who responded to the staff questionnaire are extremely positive, morale is high and the school has the capacity to improve further.
- The curriculum is very creative and motivates the pupils through the use of excellent 'entry point' activities when studying a new theme, such as setting up a crime scene. It is also very successful in positively promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences and it is accessible to all groups of pupils.
- There are numerous activities for pupils to take part in during and after school such as team sports, gymnastics, choir and a very successful gardening club.
- The school involves parents and carers by regular newsletters, invitation to year group curriculum assemblies and parent workshops. However, some parents and carers feel that they do not get enough information about their children from the school.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are fully in place.
- Following the decline in results last year the local authority has increased its support. This support has been effective in improving teaching and the progress made by the pupils. The school has also benefited from the guidance provided by a school development consultant.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is experienced and knowledgeable. Governors know the school well and have a good understanding of the quality of teaching. They know how the pupil premium has been allocated and have been asking challenging questions about its impact on improving pupils' performance. They know how performance management links to the quality of teaching and salary progression. They know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance. Governors have attended a range of training including the national training for governors. They scrutinise available data and are fully aware of how the school's achievement compares with achievement nationally. They are knowledgeable about finance and how to get best value for money.

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	101426
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	411898

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	462
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Irwin
Headteacher	Mrs Helena Lilley
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2007
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