

Benfield Primary School

255 Old Shoreham Road, Portslade, Brighton, BN41 1XS

Inspection dates 11–12 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The quality of teaching is not yet consistently good in all classes.
- Teaching is better in the core subjects of reading and mathematics than in foundation subjects such as physical education.
- Progress is uneven across the school and pupils do not make fast enough progress in writing.
- Speaking and listening skills are not taught systematically.
- Teachers do not always make their expectations clear to pupils in lessons.
- School leaders have not drawn up personalised support plans for those teachers who need to improve their practice.
- It is too early to see the impact on pupils' outcomes from initiatives such as the 'learning champions' programme.
- Attendance is still below average.

The school has the following strengths

- Strong leadership by the executive headteacher and head of school is ensuring that the school is improving rapidly.
- Standards are rising. Well-targeted support and consistently good teaching enabled pupils in Year 6 to make significant progress last year.
- Middle leaders now make a valuable contribution to the drive for improvement.
- The governing body provides effective challenge and support to school leaders.
- Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning have made a strong contribution to the improvements in learning. As a result, pupils feel safe and well cared for at the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 15 lessons jointly with the executive headteacher or head of school and made visits to both Reception classes.
- The inspector looked at pupils' workbooks in lessons and spoke to pupils about their work. A group of pupils met with the inspector.
- Four members of the governing body met with the inspector, who also spoke to a representative from the local authority by telephone and met with senior staff and middle leaders.
- The inspector considered documentary evidence of the school's work, including the governing body minutes, reports from officers of the local authority, records of pupils' attendance and school improvement plans. The inspector looked at the most recent information on pupils' progress and the school's records of checks made on the quality of teaching.
- The inspector considered the 27 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and also took account of the results of the school's own survey of parents and carers. Evidence from Ofsted's previous monitoring visits was also taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Melanie Knowles, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. There are two classes in each year group from Reception to Year 5 and three classes in Year 6.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, but the school serves an increasingly diverse community. About a fifth of pupils are learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is well above average, as is the proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to eligible for support through the pupil premium is larger than average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those with a parent in the armed services. At Benfield, the funding supports pupils from the first two groups.
- The school met the government's current floor standards in 2013. These are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The executive headteacher also leads Hangleton Infant School. The two schools work closely together.
- When the school was last inspected in November 2012, it was deemed to require special measures because the overall effectiveness of the school was inadequate and the school's ability to improve was limited. Since then, the leadership structure of the school has changed. There have also been considerable changes to the governing body. Subsequently, the school received two monitoring visits. On the occasion of this, the third monitoring visit, the school was no longer deemed to require special measures.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is consistently good or outstanding in all subjects by:
 - using information gathered from the monitoring of teaching to draw up tailored support plans for individual teachers
 - improving the quality of teaching in foundation subjects such as physical education.
- Raise achievement in writing and improve communication skills by:
 - developing pupils' spelling and handwriting skills
 - teaching speaking and listening skills systematically.
- Improve attendance by building on existing strategies to engage with those families whose children do not attend regularly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement is not yet good because rates of progress are uneven across the school. Information from teachers' assessments in July 2013 shows that most pupils made reasonable progress over the last year, but there was still considerable variation between year groups. For example, while pupils in Year 6 made good progress, pupils in lower Key Stage 2 did not.
- Many children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with communication skills that are below those expected for their age. Most make up the lost ground in reading. However, some children enter Year 1 without the ability to express themselves fluently when speaking aloud or when writing. The school does not have a consistent approach to teaching speaking and listening skills.
- Across the school, pupils make stronger progress in mathematics and reading than in writing. Work in books shows that too many pupils still struggle to write accurately. Some pupils do not form letters correctly when writing and others have weak spelling skills.
- Attainment in reading is improving. Younger pupils are taught phonics (the sounds letters make) and early reading skills every day, and are encouraged to use their skills when reading unfamiliar vocabulary and writing simple words. Recent improvements to the school's stock of reading books ensure that pupils have access to a good range of fiction and non-fiction.
- A focus on improving mental calculation skills has had a positive impact on pupils' ability to recall number facts. Pupils in most classes have well-planned opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills to solve real-life problems.
- The rate of progress for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is improving. The recently introduced 'learning champions' initiative is already having a beneficial impact on their progress in lessons. Teachers now plan activities that are well matched to the needs of these pupils and teaching assistants have been well trained to support learning.
- Pupils who are new to learning English are supported through an effective induction programme. This ensures that they settle quickly and develop the skills they need to manage in lessons. They generally make good progress over time.
- Most pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium make at least the expected progress. School leaders have used the additional government funding with care. Some support programmes, such as small group tuition in mathematics, have had a significant impact on progress. Last year, the pupils in Year 6 who were eligible for support from this funding achieved standards that were in line with their classmates and higher than the average for similar pupils nationally.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too variable, and there is not enough that is consistently good to ensure all pupils make good progress in all classes and subjects. School leaders acknowledge that teaching in the foundation subjects such as art and physical education (PE) requires further improvement.
- Teachers do not always make their expectations clear to pupils in lessons. As a result, pupils sometimes do not know what they need to do to be successful in their learning. In these classes, pupils often work too slowly and do not complete enough work in the time allowed.
- Some teachers do not take enough account of the wide ability range of pupils when leading whole-class sessions and discussions. As a result, more-able pupils are occasionally held back and some lower-attaining pupils struggle to keep up.
- Once pupils settle to their work, the activities planned for them are generally well matched to their differing needs. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and many provide valuable support to small groups or individual pupils.

- Almost all classrooms are well organised and many display useful prompts to help pupils in their work. For example, in a Year 1 classroom, the teachers collected ideas from the pupils to describe winter and these were displayed ready for pupils to use in their independent writing of a winter poem. Other resources such as word mats and lists of common words with 'tricky' spellings were placed on tables to encourage pupils to work on their own.
- The quality of marking and feedback to pupils is generally good. The marking system of 'tickled pink and green for growth' is embedded in almost all classes. Even the youngest pupils are given careful guidance on what they need to do to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- There is an emphasis on promoting positive behaviour and the school celebrates acts of kindness and friendship amongst pupils through its 'cool to be kind' initiative. This helps to combat bullying. Pupils are well informed about different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and staff are well trained to deal with any incidents effectively. Pupils are confident that any problems will be dealt with quickly.
- Good behaviour in lessons and around the school is now the norm. Pupils respond very quickly to the teacher's direction and little time is lost in lessons.
- Teachers manage behaviour well. The school's behaviour policy is applied consistently and pupils understand the consequences of any misbehaviour. They value the opportunity to earn 'golden time' as a reward for good conduct and hard work.
- Pupils are keen to learn and teachers foster independence and self-reliance. Older pupils manage well when working without the direct supervision of the class teacher. They can work effectively in pairs or small groups and share resources sensibly.
- The number of exclusions has reduced. Effective support for the small number of pupils who have difficulty managing their behaviour enables most to stay in the classroom and continue their learning.
- Although the school responds quickly to absence and emphasises the importance of good attendance, the overall level of attendance is still slightly below average. School leaders recognise that there is more to be done to ensure that all pupils come to school regularly and on time

The leadership and management are good

- Strong teamwork between the executive headteacher, head of school and the governing body has driven significant improvements in the school over the last year. Teaching is improving and pupils are achieving more in lessons. All leaders and managers share the same ambitious vision for the school and they communicate this very clearly to staff, pupils, and parents and carers.
- The deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and key middle leaders are all skilled classroom teachers who provide good role models for other staff. They have had training to develop their leadership skills and are making an increasingly strong contribution to the drive for improvement. The school's capacity for further improvement has therefore increased.
- School leaders have a very accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They review the progress of initiatives and plan next steps carefully. The school's main action plan is updated regularly so that it is always clearly focused on the areas that require improvement. Other development plans for individual subjects are not always as sharp and some lack clear targets for improvement.
- Senior and middle leaders triangulate information gained from regular visits to lessons, close scrutiny of teachers' planning and examination of work in pupils' books to gain an overview of

each teacher's strengths. They give useful feedback to teachers about how they can improve. However, this approach does not meet the needs of all teachers and some require more structured, tailored support to develop their skills.

- School leaders ensure that teachers and teaching assistants benefit from high-quality professional development and training. Systems to manage the performance of staff and make decisions about salary progression linked to pupils' progress are robust.
- The close partnership with Hangleton Infant School has brought many benefits. For example, staff from the Early Years Foundation Stage have worked together to share good practice and the governing bodies have held joint meetings. School leaders have also made very good use of support and advice from the school partnership adviser provided by the local authority.
- The safety and welfare of pupils is given high priority and school leaders ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met. Initiatives such as the 'learning champions' programme show a commitment to ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity to succeed.
- Carefully planned topics ensure that pupils study the required breadth of subjects. Topics such as 'Superheroes' and 'Victorians' meet their interests and support their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development effectively. However, there is some imbalance between subjects in the curriculum. For example, physical education (PE) does not have a high enough priority in the school. Although there are plans to use the additional government funding for PE to enhance provision, this work is at an early stage.
- Pupils do not have access to a wide range of clubs and after-school activities.
- School leaders are keen to involve parents and carers in their children's education and listen to their views. Parents and carers now have more confidence in the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body makes a significant contribution to the good leadership and management of the school. Governors know the school well and visit regularly to see improvements for themselves. They have made good use of training to build their skills and now have a clear understanding of the information about the school's performance compared to other schools locally and nationally. The governing body runs efficiently and the roles and responsibilities of various committees are clearly defined. The governing body minutes provide clear evidence of rigorous challenge to school leaders.

The governing body has made improvements to the way that the school's finances are managed and decisions about spending are now focused on raising pupils' achievement. Governors know how the pupil premium and sports funding is used and receive clear information about the impact it has had on outcomes for pupils. The governing body also knows about the quality of teaching in the school and understands how teachers' pay progression is linked to pupils' progress.

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	114412
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	423920

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	347
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Barnard Langston
Executive Headteacher	Emma Lake
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 November 2012
Telephone number	01273 294950
Fax number	01273 294948
Email address	office@benfield.brighton-hove.sch.uk

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