

Barnsole Primary School

Barnsole Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME7 2JE

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 a school that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- There is not enough good teaching. As a result, the majority of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 do not make rapid enough progress and achieve as well as they should.
- Pupils' standards at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have declined over the last few years.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics are not high enough.
- Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low and pupils do not make enough gains in their knowledge and understanding.
- At times pupils do not behave as well as they should and get on with their work.
- Senior and year-group leaders have yet to ensure that all teachers teach well.
- In the past, the governing body has not checked closely enough on the work of the school.

The school has the following strengths:

- The headteacher has rightly and successfully focused on raising standards by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' attendance is improving and the number of exclusions has been reduced.
- There is some good and outstanding teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 6 on which the school can build.
- Good appointments to the senior leadership team are helping to move the school forward.
- The school improvement plan clearly identifies the key areas for development and the progress towards the targets is being monitored closely by the governing body.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons, of which four were joint observations with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons and attended two assemblies. They heard some pupils in Years 2 and 6 read.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the learning improvement plan.
- In making their judgements, inspectors took account of the 34 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire and 15 questionnaires returned by members of staff.

Inspection team

David Wynford Jones, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Peter Thrussell	Additional Inspector
Andrew Lyons	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Barnsole Primary is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The accommodation is in two buildings separated by a main road. The pre-school, which is run by the governing body, Reception and Years 1 and 2 are based at the Sturdee Avenue site. Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 are based at the Barnsole Road site.
- The large majority of the pupils are of White British heritage. The remaining pupils come from a number of different minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average. Very few are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion identified for additional support through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and children from service families.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- In April 2010, a formal federation between Barnsole Infant School and Barnsole Junior School, which had long-standing links, was established. The two schools shared a governing body, executive headteacher and senior leadership team. When the two schools were inspected in November 2011, the infant school was judged to be good but the junior school was given a notice to improve.
- In September 2012, Barnsole Infant and Barnsole Junior Schools merged to form Barnsole Primary School under the leadership of the former executive headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what all pupils, including the more-able, can do
 - ensuring that all teachers make it clear what they expect pupils to achieve by the end of the lesson
 - making certain that pupils make good gains in their knowledge and understanding.
- Ensure that pupils make faster progress and reach higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - making certain that all pupils behave well and are engaged in their learning
 - consolidating the recent improvements in the teaching of phonics in Key Stage 1 and ensuring that weaker readers in Key Stage 2 understand and use phonics to help them in their reading
 - promoting basic writing skills and ensuring that the pupils develop a broader vocabulary
 - developing teachers' mathematical knowledge so that they can help pupils use and understand numbers and undertake more complex calculations.
- Improve the leadership of the school by:
 - developing the skills of senior and year group leaders in supporting their colleagues to teach well
 - developing the skills of year group leaders in analysing and interpreting performance data
 - ensuring that the governing body provides a greater level of challenge to the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because not all pupils make rapid progress and reach high enough standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Standards at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have declined over the last few years from securely average to close to below average.
- Pupils' progress in reading is variable. Some of the pupils in Years 3 and 4 do not read sufficiently confidently. This is because they are hampered by their lack of knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make). As a result, some have difficulty in tackling unfamiliar words.
- Pupils' progress in writing is hindered by their limited vocabulary and too few opportunities to write independently in order to master the basic skills of writing. In 2013, pupils' standard of writing at the end of Year 2 was below average although it was broadly average by the end of Year 6.
- Although standards in mathematics in 2013 at the end of Years 2 and 6 were broadly average, the majority of the pupils did not make adequate progress from their different starting points. This is because some teachers do not have sufficiently secure mathematical subject knowledge and the confidence to encourage pupils to understand and use numbers to undertake complex calculations.
- Most children enter the Reception class with levels of skills and knowledge below those expected for their age. Approximately half of the children have already attended the on-site, pre-school where they get a good start to their school experiences. In the Reception classes the children make good progress and by the end of the year have acquired the expected skills, knowledge and understanding of a typical five year old. Outcomes have improved steadily over the last few years.
- Data provided by the school show that standards at the end of Year 6 are now rising. Outcomes in 2013 were broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics and, overall, pupils made average progress in Key Stage 2. However, much of this can be attributed to their accelerated progress in Year 6.
- Pupils' progress in reading is starting to accelerate and be more consistent. Pupils' attainment in reading at the end of Year 6 is now broadly average. School data show that pupils in Year 6 make good progress by catching up lost ground from earlier in their school careers. Improvements to the teaching of phonics in Year 1 are also contributing to higher levels of attainment. In 2012 the proportion reaching the expected level in the Year 1 phonics check was below average; in 2013 it was average.
- Pupils' writing is also improving. Current assessment data suggest that pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are better placed to reach the expected levels in 2014. Pupils in Year 6 are beginning to use adjectives, metaphors and similes more frequently to help bring their writing to life and to stimulate interest.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium make slightly better progress than their classmates. In 2013, the levels reached by pupils eligible for the pupil premium in Year 6 were about a term ahead of their peers in reading and two terms in writing. In mathematics, levels were similar. The school attributes this to a number of factors and is monitoring the performance of those currently eligible for this funding closely to ensure that the different initiatives, such as additional staffing to support literacy and mathematics, are effective.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make broadly similar progress to their peers nationally. However, pupils who speak English as an additional language do not make as rapid progress as others. The school's recent focus on checking the progress of this group and the additional support being provided is helping to close the gap.
- Pupils enjoy taking part in sporting activities and have a good understanding of how sport contributes to a healthy lifestyle. Sports coaches encourage pupils to become involved in sporting activities. The primary school sports funding has been allocated appropriately.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because pupils do not make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is reflected in their achievement.
- Teachers routinely set pupils different tasks and provide guidance on how the work should be undertaken. However, they do not always make reference to the pupils' literacy and numeracy targets or make it clear what they expect pupils, working at different levels, to achieve by the end of the lesson.
- In some lessons the pace of learning is too slow and the teachers' expectations of the pupils are not high enough. As a result, work is not hard enough for some pupils, particularly those who are more able. Some pupils' behaviour slips as they lose interest and concentration.
- There is good, and some outstanding, teaching, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 6, on which the school can build. Where teaching is most effective, teachers have high expectations and are clear what they expect pupils to achieve. Teachers check during the lesson how well pupils are doing and, if necessary, quickly adapt their planning to suit the pupils' needs. Questioning is used well to ensure the pupils are clear about what they are expected to do and to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Pupils make good gains in their knowledge and understanding and the learning support assistants are deployed effectively to work with individuals and groups.
- There are many examples of good marking. Praise is used effectively and pupils are usually offered guidance as to how to improve their work. However, this good practice is not yet consistently applied in all classes.
- The school's approach to the teaching of phonics has been reorganised and improved and as a result pupils in Key Stage 1 are now making better progress and acquiring basic skills. These improvements have yet to be consolidated in Key Stage 2.
- Most teachers use a good range of strategies to manage and promote pupils' good behaviour. They work closely with teaching assistants and try to ensure that all pupils, including those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable, pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are fully included and have equal access to the same learning opportunities as other pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils require improvement

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is improving. However, the majority of pupils have still to develop a consistently positive attitude to learning so that it has a good impact on the progress they make. Although there have been some reports of racist incidents and some exclusions for inappropriate behaviour these are becoming less frequent.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are mostly good. Teachers and pupils generally treat each other with respect. Most pupils are polite and are generally well mannered in lessons, as they move around the school and at break times. Pupils say that they all get on well together for most of the time.
- Pupils are aware of different types of bullying, such as name calling, fighting and racial, religious or cyber bullying and are confident that if an incident occurred, it would be dealt with quickly and fairly.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe and have a good understanding of potential dangers, for example when using computers to access the internet or when moving between the two school buildings.
- Pupils' attendance has improved steadily and now reflects the national average for primary schools. This is helping pupils to make better progress.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Senior leaders, assistant headteachers and year group leaders have not ensured that all teaching is consistently good and that all teachers use assessment information effectively to enable all pupils to make good progress.
- Nevertheless, the measures taken by the governing body and the headteacher to improve leadership and staff development are beginning to have an impact. There is a shared and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses which feeds into the detailed school development plan. The school's more rigorous and informed planning and the improving outcomes at the end of Year 6 indicate that it has the capacity to improve.
- The headteacher checks on pupils' progress and teachers are asked to explain if pupils do not make at least the expected progress. Lessons are observed and teachers are provided with clear feedback which identifies their strengths and areas for development. Teachers have responded positively to the suggestions and have attended courses where appropriate, additional support has been provided. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated.
- There is an appropriate focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught and, where possible, brought together through a theme. Teachers of the parallel classes in each year group plan together so that pupils have equal access to the curriculum. The grouping of pupils for the teaching of mathematics in Year 6 is going well and as a result their progress is accelerating. Withdrawal groups to ensure targeted pupils reach the expected standard in English are also proving beneficial.
- The wide range of activities on offer effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are given many opportunities to enrich their education, for example by undertaking various responsibilities such as being members of the school council, and by taking part in educational visits.
- Until recently the local authority has not provided sufficient, effective support to help move the school forward.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are now checking on the work of the school more closely but do not always offer a high enough level of challenge. Nevertheless, the governing body is developing well and is working closely with the senior leadership team to secure improvements. Governors are looking more closely at the school's performance data and are asking more searching questions as they compare the school's results with local and national data. They monitor the school's budget and make sure that the pupil premium funding is spent appropriately. There are suitable processes in place to monitor the expenditure of the primary school sports funding. Governors are aware of the importance of on-going training and most attend regular training sessions. Governors understand how targets are set for teachers to improve, and the process for rewarding good teaching. Governors are keen to promote good relationships with the wider community and will not tolerate any discrimination. The governing body ensures that pupils are kept safe and that the school meets the latest requirements for safeguarding.

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	118419
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	428818

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
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	570
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Daniels
Headteacher	Alison Pullen
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2011
Telephone number	01634 333400
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