

Bethersden Primary School

School Road, Bethersden, Ashford, TN26 3AH

Inspection dates 6–7 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Pupils, staff and parents are proud of their friendly, welcoming school.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Standards improved in 2013 because teaching is typically good, and some is outstanding.
- Teachers plan motivating lessons that pupils find interesting.
- Rigorous checks on teaching and progress and good use of training and support have led to improved achievement for pupils.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and have every confidence in the headteacher and their children’s teachers. They are very positive about the changes under the new leadership.
- Children get off to a successful start in the Reception Year and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils’ behaviour is good. They have good attitudes to learning and feel safe in the school.
- The headteacher, ably assisted by the deputy headteacher, other school leaders and the governing body, has been highly effective in leading changes that have resulted in improvements in teaching and achievement.
- The strong staff team has the ambition, drive and skills to make the school even better.
- The governing body has a good grasp of the school’s strengths and weaknesses and holds staff accountable for pupils’ achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of outstanding teaching is not yet high enough.
- Occasionally some pupils do not make the progress they are capable of to reach their full potential.
- The successful approach to learning in reading and writing is yet to be fully developed in other subjects.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 lessons and part lessons, all of which were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspector talked to pupils about their work, looked at books and listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other staff with key leadership responsibilities. Discussions were also held with pupils, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's own check on its performance, including the quality of teaching, the school improvement plan, information on pupils' progress and documents relating to safeguarding.
- The inspector took account of 22 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke to some parents at the start of the day. She also looked at 18 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The next largest group are pupils from Romany or Gypsy backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receive additional funds (pupil premium) is average. This is additional funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, in care or from service families.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a mixed Reception and Year 1 class.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2012 and the deputy headteacher in April 2013.
- There is a pre-school facility on the school site, which is managed by a private provider and therefore not included in this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of outstanding teaching in order to raise pupils' achievement by ensuring that:
 - expectations and challenge are consistently high so that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable
 - the successful approach to learning in reading and writing is fully embedded and is incorporated into all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards are rising for all groups of pupils because of higher expectations and rigorous checking of pupils' progress across the school.
- Small and fluctuating numbers in each year group mean that published data needs to be interpreted with caution because one pupil can represent a high percentage of the total. This can sometimes mask the fact that most pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Children start at the school with skills and knowledge that are a little below the expectations for their age. They get a good start to school in the Reception Year and make good progress. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the time they start in Year 1 is above that found nationally.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has fluctuated over the past three years, but in 2013 it was broadly average. The school's own tracking data and work seen in books show that pupils currently in Year 2 are making good progress and are on track to reach higher standards at the end of this year.
- In the 2013 national tests and assessments, standards improved from the previous year and were above average in reading and writing, and slightly below in mathematics. All pupils achieved the expected level in reading, and almost all did in writing and mathematics. However, not as many more able pupils reached the higher level in mathematics as they did in reading and writing.
- Leaders are taking effective action to remedy this by raising expectations for achievement and targeting the more able pupils to reach the higher Levels 5 and 6 in mathematics by the end of the year. The school's information on pupils' progress and work in pupils' books show that achievement in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils currently in Key Stage 2 is good.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and pupils from minority ethnic groups make similar progress to that of other pupils in their classes because the school provides well-targeted support for them.
- In 2013 only a very small number of pupils in the Year 6 group were eligible to be supported by the additional pupil premium funds. Their attainment lagged behind their classmates' by six months in reading, eight months in mathematics and 22 months in writing. They made expected progress from their starting points in reading, writing and maths but, apart from in reading, did not attain higher levels. However, the school is narrowing the gap in achievement and, currently, eligible pupils are making similar progress to others in all year groups.
- Pupils' knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is currently better than indicated by the Year 1 phonics screening check, where it was below average in 2012 and 2013. This is because the recently introduced whole-school approach is having a positive impact and is rapidly improving pupils' phonic skills. Pupils are enthusiastic readers from the Reception Year to Year 6 because reading for enjoyment is promoted well.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good and sometimes it is outstanding. Pupils have good attitudes to learning, enjoy their lessons and achieve well because teachers provide motivating lessons that interest and inspire them.
- Teachers expect pupils to take a pride in their work and are good role models by making sure that their classrooms are attractive and tidy, lessons start promptly and displays are motivating and support learning well.
- There are excellent relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils and, as a result, pupils want to do well and are prepared to work hard. Teaching assistants mostly make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning and work effectively with class teachers.

- Teachers manage behaviour consistently well and pupils respond very quickly and without fuss when they need to listen to instructions during a lesson, which helps them to stay engrossed in learning. Pupils in Year 3 and 4 working on a mathematical problem-solving activity tried things out for themselves and then listened well to the teacher to develop good logical thinking skills and make good progress.
- All groups, including those who need extra help, those supported by additional funds and those from minority ethnic groups, learn well because they receive well-managed and skilled help to make at least good progress. The most able pupils are challenged effectively and this is helping to speed up their progress in mathematics.
- Teachers prepare work for pupils of different abilities to ensure that they all learn well. On occasion, however, expectations and challenge for some pupils are not high enough to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders have correctly identified this to improve in order to achieve their aim of outstanding progress for every pupil.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and give pupils clear pointers about how to improve their work and the next steps in learning. Pupils in Year 6 said that, 'What the teacher writes really helps us to do things better the next time.' Pupils clearly know the targets they have been set to improve their work and what they need to know to achieve them.
- The whole-school approach to teaching reading and writing ensures that pupils gain essential skills quickly. In mathematics, pupils are currently learning more effectively as a result of daily 'maths blasters' sessions, which enable teachers to identify gaps in pupils' learning, effective use of resources and increased mathematics homework tasks. Pupils enjoy mathematics lessons and many said it was now their favourite subject.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage develop a wide range of skills and knowledge, both inside and outside, because the well-resourced learning areas ensure that they have a good range of motivating, challenging activities.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well in lessons and around the school and when they are working with teachers, teaching assistants or other adults. School records show that the good behaviour seen during the inspection is typical of behaviour over time.
- The school promotes positive relationships and pupils are polite, caring, considerate and respectful. They were keen to talk to the inspector about their work and tell her how much they liked their school.
- Pupils respond positively to the school's new 'Sunshine Behaviour' approach and understand that good behaviour helps them to learn well.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school and the school helps them to understand how to keep safe in and out of school, including road safety and e-safety. All parents who responded to the online survey agree that children are well looked after, feel safe and behave well.
- Pupils have a good awareness of all the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, and say there are very few incidents of inappropriate behaviour or bullying in school. They are confident that teachers deal promptly and fairly with any incidents should they occur.
- A very few pupils who find it difficult to moderate their own behaviour still need reminding about acceptable behaviour, particularly in the playground. The recent appointments of a family liaison officer, learning mentor and play leader provide good support for pupils. Teachers ensure that rare incidents of unacceptable behaviour do not disrupt learning for others.
- Attendance is improving and is now much closer to the national average. The recent appointment of an attendance officer and the work of the family liaison officer have had an immediate impact on improving attendance, and pupils are very keen to receive class and individual rewards for good attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides very effective and inspirational leadership for the school. She has motivated staff, pupils and governors and created a strong staff team to provide the best possible academic and personal experiences for pupils.
- All staff say they feel valued and are very positive about the guidance and help they receive in meeting their targets and improving their expertise.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and very supportive of changes made under the new leadership. They have every confidence in the headteacher and all the teachers.
- The headteacher is very well supported by the deputy headteacher and other leaders and, as a result of their work, they have raised expectations to ensure that pupils are now making good progress and achieve well. They are relentless, passionate and determined in their drive and ambition to ensure that achievement for every child is even better.
- Subject leaders, including some who are new to leadership, are well supported in developing their skills to provide guidance and expertise to colleagues, and all make a good contribution to school improvement.
- Close checks are kept on all of the school's work, including pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. If any weaknesses are identified, leaders provide good support and expect to see improvements. The school gives high priority to training for staff to ensure they are up to date and skilled.
- Leaders have successfully moved the school forward from its satisfactory position at the previous inspection and demonstrate a strong capacity for further improvement. Leadership and management are not yet outstanding, however, because despite the improving picture for pupils currently in the school, achievement and teaching are not yet outstanding.
- The school provides a broad and varied range of subjects that meets the interests of pupils well. Appropriate emphasis is given to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, with opportunities for them to use these skills in other subjects. The recently adopted whole-school approach to teaching reading and writing is promoting pupils' skills as learners in other subjects. The school has correctly identified that this approach needs to be fully embedded and built upon in its review of the new curriculum.
- Pupils' learning and skills and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are greatly enriched by a wide range of additional activities, trips and clubs. They thoroughly enjoy the 'skillstastic' afternoons where they can choose from a range of activities, for example, cooking, curling, zumba dancing or learning in the local woodland area. These opportunities enable pupils to learn new skills, to work together with older or younger pupils and to develop good personal attributes.
- The school ensures equal opportunities and all pupils have access to the full range of subjects and learn in a supportive, caring school without fear of any type of discrimination. Different cultures are celebrated and benefit all pupils' cultural awareness. For example, in discussion, pupils of Gypsy/Roma Traveller families said they were proud that their culture and language were valued in the school and others said how lucky they were to learn about different lifestyles from their friends and classmates.
- The school is using the extra money for primary sports in a variety of ways. These include working with a specialist from a secondary school to improve pupils' and teachers' skills. The school has also increased the range of sports available to pupils in after-school clubs and so an increasing number of pupils participate. These initiatives are making a positive contribution to pupils' well-being and health.
- The school works well in partnership with a group of other local schools to share skills and expertise. The local authority supports the school well, particularly by working with senior leaders to check on the progress and impact of the school's work.
- **The governance of the school:**

The governing body has a good knowledge of the school's strengths and improvement priorities and knows how well the school is doing compared to the national picture. Governors are well informed by the headteacher and, increasingly, by their own monitoring visits to

school. They have a good understanding of the data, including the school's own progress information that enables them to ask questions and challenge the school's performance. Governors are ambitious for the school and very supportive of the headteacher's drive and vision for the school. The governing body has a good awareness of the school's pay and promotion processes, and checks the performance of staff and the quality of teaching. They are aware of where underperformance has been addressed in the past. Governors are fully aware of how the school is spending additional funding and the impact this has on pupils' achievement. Safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements so that pupils and staff are safe.

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	118372
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	429515

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	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Monaghan
Headteacher	Emma Dyer
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 May 2012
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