

North Borough Junior School

Peel Street, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 2BP

Inspection dates

24–25 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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.

- The school has tackled the weaknesses identified by the last inspection with success. Under highly effective leadership, the strong staff team has worked together to raise pupils' achievement.
- Most pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, achieve well, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported well. They make good progress, like their peers.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Pupils, including the most able, learn well because the work they are set is usually challenging and teachers check pupils' understanding regularly in lessons.
- Pupils' behaviour is consistently good across the whole school and often exemplary. Pupils are well cared for and feel safe.
- Relationships within the school are excellent. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is particularly strong.
- Pupils learn well during most lessons because they fully engage in what they are doing and because the creative topics they study excite them.
- The work of the governing body has improved since the last inspection. Governors now rigorously monitor pupils' progress and provide excellent support and high levels of challenge.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A few pupils do not do as well in writing as they do in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to act upon the good, written feedback they are given in their books. They do not always fully understand how to improve their work.
- Occasionally, the work set in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics is too easy, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Recently introduced checks on teaching and learning are not yet part of normal practice for subject and middle leaders.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited every class. They observed one assembly, 23 lessons or part lessons and pupils' behaviour in the playground. Four lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with pupils, three members of the governing body, the headteacher and other members of staff.
- The inspectors observed many aspects of the school's work, including the supervision and support for pupils who need extra help. They heard pupils read and examined pupils' work in their exercise books and on classroom and corridor wall displays.
- The inspectors looked at a number of documents, including plans for what pupils will learn in each subject, plans for the school's future development, records of the school's use of sports and pupil premium funding, the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe, pupils' attendance records, minutes of governing body meetings, and records of how pupils' learning is tracked and the quality of teaching checked.
- The views of parents and carers were taken into account through taking note of the 29 responses to the online Parent View survey.
- Staff views were taken into consideration by looking at questionnaires completed by 20 staff members and through discussions with several members of staff.

Inspection team

Gianni Bianchi, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Maura Docherty	Additional Inspector
Sue Cox	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized junior school. It has 11 classes, three in each of Years 3, 4 and 5 and two in Year 6.
- Most pupils are White British, although the proportion of pupils who have minority ethnic backgrounds is above average.
- The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority) is above the national average. In 2013, almost half of the Year 6 pupils were eligible for the pupil premium.
- The school meets the current floor standards, the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A significant number of pupils join the school in year groups other than Year 3 or leave before Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement so that both are outstanding by ensuring that:
 - pupils do as well in writing as they do in reading and mathematics
 - teachers' marking always shows pupils what they have to do next
 - pupils are given more opportunities to act upon teachers' feedback so that they fully understand how to improve their work
 - all pupils are as well challenged in all subjects as they are in reading and mathematics.
- Give subject and other middle leaders full confidence to carry out checks on teaching and pupils' achievement in the subjects and areas for which they are responsible.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the last inspection as a result of better teaching and school leaders' high expectations.
- Throughout the school, pupils achieve well. In 2013 national assessments, Year 6 pupils made excellent progress in reading and mathematics and good progress in writing. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work and leaders know that more needs to be done to ensure pupils achieve as well in writing as they do in mathematics and reading.
- Standards in mathematics are particularly high. This is because of the good range of experiences that pupils encounter, including challenging investigation activities. This helps pupils to develop logic and devise their own strategies for tackling thought-provoking problems.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about reading. Pupils who read to the inspectors were fluent and expressive readers and demonstrated good understanding. They knew their challenging targets and how to achieve them.
- The work of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is carefully monitored. Teaching assistants provide a very good balance of guidance and support for these pupils and they gain considerable confidence in their ability as they move through the school. As a result, they make good progress.
- Year 6 pupils eligible for additional funding did not get as good results as others in their year group in the 2013 end-of-year tests; they were about 16 months behind in both English and mathematics. However, once starting points are taken into account, these pupils made similar progress to their classmates. The additional funding is used to provide extra teaching and pastoral support for pupils who need it. School data and the work seen in pupils' books by inspectors indicate that eligible pupils are now achieving as well as their classmates both academically and emotionally.
- Their good achievement means that pupils are well prepared for secondary education. This includes the small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language.

The quality of teaching is good

- The work seen by inspectors in pupils' books, the school's records about the quality of teaching and observations during the inspection showed that teaching is good.
- Pupils like the work they are given to do because teachers choose exciting topics for them to study. Pupils learn well because teachers know a lot about the subjects they are teaching and ask probing questions of the pupils to check what they have learnt.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils are high and, when set more difficult work, pupils achieve as well as they can. In an effective Year 4 lesson, where pupils were learning to write complex sentences, the most able pupils were promptly moved on to a more challenging task and, as a result, made better progress. However, this level of challenge is not as consistent in writing as it is in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils take responsibility for assessing their own work and progress alongside teachers. This helps them to have a very clear understanding of how they are learning. This engagement was particularly effective in Year 6 lessons, where pupils were totally absorbed in their work and their determination to succeed was very evident. As a result, they made good progress.
- The work in pupils' mathematics books shows that pupils are given challenging work to do, which is the reason why they achieve so well. As one child simply put it, 'I love maths, teachers challenge us to do our very best.' Occasionally in other subjects, such as geography and history, the work set for the pupils, particularly the most able, is too easy and they do not do as well as they should.
- Pupils' books are regularly marked, with detailed comments from teachers that help pupils

improve their work. However, they are not always given enough opportunities to respond to teachers' suggestions and improve their work.

- Pupils display great pride in their work across all the subjects, taking care over their handwriting and presentation. All those spoken to by the inspectors praised the quality of teaching and said they enjoyed their lessons.
- All parents and carers who offered an opinion considered that their children are taught well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have high expectations of their own behaviour and this contributes to their good achievement.
- The school is welcoming and pupils' behaviour in class and around school is very good. Pupils are considerate and courteous to each other, eager to learn and listen attentively to teachers' instructions.
- Pupils are very supportive of each other and relationships are strong. Older pupils help younger pupils at playtimes and in their work. For example, the most able Year 6 pupils help support younger children who find reading more of a challenge.
- The management of pupils' behaviour is effective. Pupils said that there is occasionally disruptive behaviour in lessons which stops them from learning, but considered their teachers to be very good at regaining pupils' attention.
- The behaviour of pupils is not outstanding because in some lessons, where pupils are not sufficiently challenged, they begin to fidget, become less interested and their rates of progress slow.
- The school's work to promote the safety of pupils at the school is outstanding because pupils know how to keep themselves safe and feel very safe at school. Pupils are confident in lessons to share what they are doing with each other in an atmosphere free from discrimination and without fear of making a mistake.
- Pupils understand different forms of bullying and know how to stay safe on the internet. Pupils told inspectors that bullying is rare and if it occurs their teachers will help them resolve it.
- Almost all parents and carers who expressed an opinion considered their children to be safe, happy and well looked after.
- Attendance is high and pupils enjoy coming to school.

The leadership and management are good

- The determination of the headteacher and other senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection has paid dividends, demonstrating the school's capacity for further improvement.
- Teachers know that they are accountable and there are good systems in place to keep track of pupils' progress, particularly for groups of pupils who may not be doing as well as they should. Any extra support that is provided is frequently evaluated to check that it is making a difference.
- Senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching, focusing on how well it enables pupils to learn. They give teachers clear feedback so that they know how to improve and make sure training is available where it is needed.
- Subject and other middle leaders are developing their confidence in the subjects and areas for which they are responsible. Senior leaders know that more work is needed to develop the roles of middle leaders so that they are fully involved in carrying out checks on learning and raising standards.
- Pupils enjoy the topics they experience and their 'creative curriculum' books show that they have many opportunities to apply reading, writing and mathematical skills in other subjects. They are curious and ask thoughtful questions to find out more about what they are studying. The subjects they learn are supported with trips and visits and a good range of additional activities and clubs.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and it promotes the school's values. Pupils work cooperatively and support each other in their work. They have opportunities to take on responsibilities; for example, Year 6 pupils are very proud to be prefects.
- The new primary sport funding is used primarily to employ sports coaches who promote pupils' active engagement in sports. Pupils' participation in physical activity has increased and leaders are seeing improvements in the self-esteem of pupils at risk of not doing well.
- The school ensures that all statutory safeguarding requirements are met.
- The local authority has provided a high level of support since the previous inspection and this has helped improve the quality of teaching. The school is part of a consortium of nine local schools which share expertise and resources effectively.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The work of the governing body has improved since the last inspection. Governors have received training about school data and now have a good understanding about pupils' achievement and how it compares with similar schools nationally. As a result, they are confident in challenging leaders about the provision and results that need to be improved. Governors monitor the quality of teaching and set challenging targets for the headteacher. They check that teachers are given the support they need to improve and are properly rewarded for good performance. Governors scrutinise school finances carefully, including the use and effectiveness of additional funding. Their impact on the school's improvement is good.

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	118301
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	442464
Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Sime
Headteacher	Christine Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 November 2012
Telephone number	01622 754708
Email address	CMarshall@north-borough.kent.sch.uk

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