

Barnsole Primary School

Barnsole Road, Gillingham, Kent ME7 2JG

Inspection dates	17–18 March 2016
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The inspirational headteacher has created a culture of high expectations and a vision of excellence that is shared by staff and governors.
- Leaders throughout the school have used their enthusiasm and shared determination to raise standards. They are jointly responsible for the improvements made.
- Teaching has improved rapidly since the previous inspection and is now outstanding overall.
- From generally low starting points, pupils make rapid and sustained progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school.
- Outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 2 are above national averages, demonstrating that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as all other pupils nationally.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They take responsibility for their learning and for jobs around the school. They take care of themselves and others very well.
- Current pupils in all year groups are making rapid progress to develop their knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils use both spoken and written language confidently. Their use of interesting vocabulary is developed exceptionally well.
- Governors know their school and community well. They hold leaders to account and ensure they use resources smartly so that pupils make outstanding progress.
- Children get off to a superb start to their education in the outstanding early years provision. Children make accelerated progress from low starting points in both the Nursery and the Reception settings.
- Attendance has improved markedly and is now in line with the national average.
- Processes to keep pupils safe in school and in the wider world are highly effective.
- The interesting and lively curriculum contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Behaviour has improved remarkably since the previous inspection.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop pupils' artistic, enquiry, investigative and sporting skills further so they complement and build effectively on their strong academic performance in English and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The outstanding headteacher has succeeded in joining two separate buildings on the opposite sides of a main road and transforming them into one outstanding school that inspires the pupils from the community it serves. There is a culture of excellence, where excuses for underperformance are not accepted and all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have the opportunity to be successful.
- As one parent commented, the school has been improved 'beyond all recognition'. The vast majority of parents say that the school is well led and managed. They can see the rapid improvements for themselves and would be very happy to recommend the school to others.
- Together with the deputy headteacher, the headteacher has led the 'talk for teaching' programme that has been an instrumental part of transforming the quality of teaching over time. The high-quality teaching in this school now leads to outstanding outcomes for pupils. The school has used this professional development programme to involve leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, governors and other members of the school staff in observing teaching together. They have detailed conversations about the effectiveness of what is seen and how it can be improved. Staff discuss the quality of teaching regularly and freely share ideas about what works well with colleagues.
- Staff that completed Ofsted's online survey or spoke to inspectors were very clear about how much the school has improved. They say that leaders give them the opportunity to take risks in their teaching and innovate while completely understanding they are working towards a shared vision of excellence.
- The headteacher has a real eye for developing leadership potential at all levels. Teachers are keen to develop and to have the opportunity to become leaders in this school. They are enticed by the direct impact they can have on making improvements to teaching and pupils' outcomes beyond their own classrooms. As talent has been spotted and nurtured, the leadership team has grown and been strengthened.
- Leaders such as those in charge of key stages, year groups or subject areas, including English and mathematics, are given clear responsibility and autonomy for making improvements. However, they are wholly accountable, to both senior leaders and governors, for their actions and the impact they have on raising standards.
- All of the leaders that inspectors met during the inspection are passionate about making a difference to pupils and thrive within the school's culture of continuous improvement. Their work is perfectly orchestrated by the senior leaders so that it all contributes towards the rapid progress all pupils make.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance and can correctly identify the many strengths and the relatively few weaknesses in teaching and pupils' learning.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is well led and is effective in enabling these pupils to make rapid progress from their starting points. The inclusion manager and her dedicated team ensure that pupils' welfare and well-being are given the highest possible priority.
- Pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils is used very effectively to enable these pupils to join in fully with all elements of school life and to achieve excellent outcomes academically.
- The primary sports grant has been used extremely successfully to raise participation in recreational and competitive sport. Enthusiastic sports coaches work alongside teachers to teach physical education, provide a range of physical activities at break and lunchtimes and also support some pupils in class.
- The bright and colourful school environment vividly represents and reflects the exciting, broad and balanced curriculum that pupils at Barnsole enjoy. Walking around this vibrant school can take you from Ancient Egypt to outer space in just a few short steps. The curriculum is complemented by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, clubs, trips to places of interest and an annual residential visit for older pupils.
- School leaders know that while pupils make very strong overall progress, they do not have as much opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in areas such as the arts, computing, humanities, science and physical education to the same depth as they do in English and mathematics.
- The local authority has provided effective support and challenge to the school since the previous inspection. Recent support includes development of the early years provision and the moderation and teaching of writing.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have a wide range of skills and experience, but above all know the school and community of Barnsole extremely well. They visit the school regularly to monitor the impact of actions that leaders

have taken to make improvements and ask the right challenging questions to ensure any changes are effective. They know how well the school is performing.

- By attending the ‘talk for teaching’ sessions with school leaders, governors can see for themselves how the whole staff work together to improve the quality of teaching.
- Governors ensure the school’s financial resources are very well managed. Pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils and the primary sports grant are spent effectively. Governors check that pay decisions for teachers are based on rigorous performance management that takes account of the outcomes of the pupils they teach.
- Governors made a shrewd decision to bring the new Nursery provision under their control. It allows school leaders to ensure that the children who attend have a positive foundation to their learning and behaviour that can be built on when the children enter the Reception classes.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff and governors receive regular training so that they are able to identify the signs and symptoms that suggest a child may be at risk of harm. Leaders work well with other agencies to keep pupils safe. They carry out checks to ensure that all staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children. Risk assessments for different areas of the school and different events and activities are comprehensive. The school site is safe and secure. Governors regularly check and audit the safeguarding arrangements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is now outstanding. This high-quality teaching has led to pupils making accelerated progress in reading, writing and mathematics and achieving outstanding outcomes overall.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to plan interesting lessons that enable pupils to make strong progress. They regularly ask probing questions that help pupils to deepen their learning, justify their ideas and clarify their thinking. The most-able pupils are regularly challenged to achieve more through being set more demanding tasks.
- Teachers plan lessons that ensure pupils take an active part in their learning. The use of discussion between pupils is extremely effective. For example, in preparation for some poetry writing, Year 5 pupils confidently and passionately discussed their reactions to different pictures of animals performing in a circus, using an impressive array of vocabulary.
- Clear routines, positive relationships between adults and pupils, and the careful use of prompts and targets to shape tasks are all characteristics of the highly effective teaching seen during the inspection. Additionally, teachers model how to read with expression and passion, to write with a real love of vocabulary and to calculate with precision and confidence. High expectations of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are the norm.
- Where teaching was most successful, teachers regularly reshape tasks to move learning on quickly so pupils are consistently well challenged. This was not always as strongly evident where teachers were working with new or different classes.
- Teaching assistants make a significantly helpful contribution to learning. They have good subject knowledge and are able to successfully channel pupils’ energy towards their learning, ensuring that positive attitudes and behaviour for learning are maintained. They know those pupils who have special educational needs or disability extremely well and are therefore able to support their learning effectively and sensitively.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is highly effective. The school groups pupils by ability in this area so that tasks are well matched to their needs. The correct enunciation of letter sounds is demonstrated by teachers who also successfully use technical vocabulary such as ‘digraphs’ with Year 1 pupils. Teachers exploit any opportunities to make links with phonics in pupils’ other learning, for example pointing out a spelling pattern that had been used in an earlier lesson in a shared text.
- As pupils get older, teachers encourage them to read widely across a range of genres. Any younger children who find reading more difficult are systematically given the skills to decode words and understand their meaning.
- When teaching mathematics, teachers skilfully help pupils to progress from using structured apparatus to using careful jottings to scaffold their understanding. Pupils then move on to abstract methods of calculation as their understanding develops.

- In English and mathematics, pupils receive high-quality feedback on their work in line with the school's policy. This is effective in helping pupils to make thoughtful responses and improvements to their work. This feedback is instrumental in helping pupils to make rapid gains in their learning.
- The school has developed and embedded a systematic and robust way of tracking pupils' progress. This system is well understood by all teachers who use it to check how well their pupils are doing and to plan the next steps of learning for them. The school compares assessment information with local schools to ensure teachers' judgements are accurate. The local authority have provided further reassurance in this area, agreeing that the school's assessments are accurate.
- The vast majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online Parent View survey believe their children are well taught. They are also happy with the range of information they receive from the school about their child's progress. The school provides a wide range of opportunities for parents to learn how they can best support their children's learning. Recent work on developing the skills of some parents so they can confidently read with their children has been both impressive and inspiring.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Exceptionally well-planned work on developing language and vocabulary ensures that pupils are confident speakers by the time they reach Year 6 and can eloquently debate issues convincingly, but respectfully.
- Pupils have the opportunity to take on a wide range of responsibilities such as being peer mediators, librarians, school councillors and head boy and head girl. Each of these roles contributes to the decision-making processes in the school or promotes learning to other pupils. For example, the school council compiled the school's list of 'golden rules'.
- In addition, the innovatively named 'Ground Crew' are a group of pupils who have been specially selected to carry out a range of important tasks around the school. As one pupil explained, 'The Ground Crew keep the school running'.
- Pupils take great pride in their work; they are highly motivated learners who present their work neatly. The presentation of the Year 6 writing books is especially impressive.
- Pupils play an important role in leading assemblies. They present rewards and highlight the achievements of their peers. The weekly celebration assemblies are a time for sharing success and highlighting the very many strengths that exist in the school. Pupils also help to lead special events such as talent shows and sponsored events such as a 'Zumbathon' for Sports Relief.
- Through a well-planned programme of personal, social and health education, pupils learn to stay safe in a range of situations. They feel safe at school and know how to stay safe online when using a computer.
- Pupils are aware of British values such as democracy. A recent trip to visit the Houses of Parliament embedded this understanding for a group of children.
- Attendance has improved rapidly, largely due to the relatively new family liaison officer who is tenacious in following up absence. As a result, attendance is now in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is also reducing.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is well developed. They have an extensive range of opportunities to try new experiences, such as a school-wide initiative to learn a few words in a different language each term. This term, pupils throughout the school are learning some simple Urdu phrases and greetings.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Behaviour has improved dramatically since the previous inspection. The sight of nearly 100 very active pupils engaged in energetic Zumba dancing together as part of a sponsored charity event beautifully demonstrated the pupils' sense of teamwork and shared determination to succeed. As the headteacher rightly pointed out, such relatively unstructured events would not have been possible two years ago, when expectations about behaviour were not so high.
- A group of eloquent Year 6 pupils explained clearly why behaviour is so impressive: 'You can feel the mood of the school differently now... it is the mood of respect... listening to and valuing what others have to say'.

- Staff set high expectations of behaviour and follow policies consistently. This starts from the earliest age in the two-year-old Nursery provision where adults teach children what is right and wrong. These expectations continue right through the school, which is a calm place of learning. A different phrase such as 'believe in yourself' is used to focus and inspire pupils throughout the school each term.
- Pupils live up to the high expectations, demonstrate extremely positive learning behaviour in lessons and work together well in groups. This allows them to make rapid progress and achieve outstanding outcomes in their learning. Pupils value the rewards that are available for doing the right thing.
- Behaviour at playtimes is also extremely positive. Pupils enjoy the range of activities available. For example, they can sit in quieter courtyard areas, play with a range of different equipment or take part in active sports led by the enthusiastic sports coaches.
- There are still a very few pupils who find managing their behaviour more difficult. However, they are extremely well supported by skilled adults. Incidents of poor behaviour for these children are declining rapidly because of high expectations from all adults and the pupils' own enthusiastic engagement in outstanding teaching and learning.
- Fixed-term exclusions, which were previously used routinely, have not been used in the current academic year.
- Parents who completed the Parent View survey and staff who completed the online survey are very positive about pupils' behaviour and how it is managed.
- Pupils, almost without exception, say that they feel safe at school. However, some pupils say they have been bullied in the past. Inspectors and pupils are confident that any incidents of bullying that are reported are followed up rigorously by the school leaders. However, school leaders agreed that pupils themselves could do a bit more to promote anti-bullying messages.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- The school's own assessment information shows that current pupils in all year groups are making more than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's assessment systems are robust and moderated internally as well as with other local schools. Information is also checked and verified by the local authority.
- As well as observing lessons, inspectors checked pupils' work books and spoke to pupils about their learning to confirm that they are making the rapid progress the school has recorded.
- All groups of pupils, such as boys, girls and those who have special educational needs or disability, are currently making more than expected progress. There are no significant gaps in achievement for different groups. Attainment is rising and a higher than expected proportion of pupils are meeting or exceeding the age-related expectations.
- Published key stage 2 results for 2015 show that pupils made much faster progress than most schools nationally and achieved standards that were above average for their age. This means that pupils left Barnsole Primary well equipped for the next stage of their education.
- Given pupils' often low starting points in Reception, their recent progress and achievements throughout the school are all the more impressive.
- For those pupils who are disadvantaged, the gaps in achievement when compared to other children are now closed or narrowing rapidly due to outstanding teaching over time and extremely effective welfare support.
- The most-able pupils are making rapid progress in their learning because of teachers' consistently high expectations and because of their own aspirations for future success.
- There have been significant improvements in the outcomes of the phonics screening check in both Year 1 and Year 2. Those pupils who have not yet met the standard expected are making rapid progress in developing their skills.
- Pupils develop a rich vocabulary and depth of learning in English. They understand the use of language and the power it can have in writing and verbal debate. In a text study, older pupils were able to read the tone and mood of a monologue and delve into a character's thoughts and feelings, showing great empathy.
- In mathematics, pupils develop their understanding rapidly and apply their skills by solving problems and using mathematical reasoning. For example, a group of most-able Year 6 pupils were able to solve complex problems with ratio and proportion that involved different units of measurement.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- The early years leader is ambitious and has driven rapid improvements in the setting while building a new team that thrives on positive relationships and works together extremely well. This has in turn raised expectations and improved outcomes for all groups of children. As a result, the early years provision is now outstanding overall.
- The governing body assumed responsibility for the Nursery provision for two- and three-year-olds in September 2015. Since then, leaders have created a stimulating learning environment that is suitably resourced for these children. Routines have been established very quickly and high expectations have been set. The children attending this provision are on target to be very well prepared for the Reception Year when they join in September 2016 or 2017.
- The foundations for successful learning are truly embedded in the Nursery. There is a calm environment where two-year-olds are taught to play together, for example through careful modelling and demonstration by well-skilled adults. The school's focus on language and vocabulary starts here. Staff talk constantly as a model for children to follow and copy. As a result, children who have previously been reluctant to speak become more confident to have a go.
- The three-year-old Nursery provision builds on the earlier success. Children receive tremendous support from well-trained adults who have benefited from high-quality professional development activities. The curriculum is stimulating and children are constantly busy. For example, the children were celebrating Sports Relief during the inspection by completing an obstacle course and making healthy flatbread sandwiches using a range of fruits and vegetables. Children had the confidence to talk to inspectors about their learning.
- From starting points that are below those found typically for their age, children make rapid progress through the early years and a larger proportion of children achieve a good level of development than the national average. As a result, children are very well prepared socially, emotionally and academically for the next stage of their education in Year 1. Previous gaps in achievement between different areas of learning have closed or narrowed significantly.
- Direct teaching by adults, for example in phonics, is of the highest quality. This leads to children making great progress. Many of the current Nursery children will have successfully developed early reading skills before they begin Reception.
- Children in the Reception classes really enjoy their learning. There is a constant positive buzz of purposeful activity both inside and outside. The children demonstrate good self-control and a clear respect for adults.
- Rigorous tracking of children's progress by teachers and the early years leader ensure that no child falls behind in their learning. Leaders make incisive evaluations of what is working well and what is not. Where specific goals and targets are not being achieved, extra activities are quickly planned and provided to address this.
- Leaders ensure there are excellent links with parents and other early years providers, such as alternative feeder nurseries or childminders, right from before they start school or Nursery and throughout their time in the setting .
- Throughout the early years, the correct staffing ratios and qualifications are maintained, all welfare requirements are fully met and safeguarding practices are secure.
- Currently, children in the two-year-old provision only have access to an outside area to play and learn on a rota basis. School leaders are aware and have clear plans to rectify this to provide free-flow outdoor facilities in the future.

School details

Unique reference number	118419
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10002342

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	696
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Daniels
Headteacher	Sean McKeown
Telephone number	01634 333400
Website	www.barnsoleprimary.medway.sch.uk
Email address	office@barnsoleprimary.medway.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 December 2013

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school and is organised on two separate sites on the opposite sides of a main road. One site accommodates the early years provision and key stage 1 while the other site accommodates key stage 2.
- The school provides full-time early years provision in three Reception classes. Since September 2015, the governing body have also been responsible for the on-site Nursery that provides separate part-time provision for two- and three-year olds. This includes funded provision for disadvantaged two-year-olds.
- About one third of the pupils on roll are eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils), which is more than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above that found in primary schools nationally.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. One in 10 pupils has a first language other than English.
- The school meets the current government floor standards which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher chairs a group of 10 primary schools that work together as the 'South Bank Consortium'.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in each class at least once. They also made shorter visits to a number of lessons. Many of the observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or assistant headteacher.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other school leaders, newly qualified teachers, six governors (including the chair of the governing body) and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally in class, on the playgrounds and in the dining halls to seek their views about the school. They also met with groups of key stage 1 and key stage 2 pupils more formally to discuss many aspects of school life. They also looked at the 41 responses from the online pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors heard pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school website and a range of school documents, including: assessment information, minutes from governors' meetings and the school's improvement plans.
- Inspectors considered the 107 responses to the online Parent View survey. They also spoke to some parents before school at the beginning of the inspection and considered a letter from a local childcare provider.
- Inspectors took account of the 39 questionnaires completed by members of staff.

Inspection team

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Caroline Dulon	Her Majesty's Inspector
Judith Grevett	Ofsted Inspector

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