



Barnsole Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118419
LEA Medway
Inspection number 285113
Inspection dates 15 March 2006 to 16 March 2006
Reporting inspector David Collard AI

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Sturdee Avenue
School category	Community		Gillingham
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		Kent ME7 2JE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01634 852976
Number on roll	206	Fax number	01634 572889
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr J Locke
Date of previous inspection	16 September 2003	Headteacher	Mrs A Pullen

Age group 4 to 7	Inspection dates 15 March 2006 - 16 March 2006	Inspection number 285113
----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Barnsole Infants is an average-sized school serving a mixed social area with some significant levels of deprivation. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is higher than average. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is low. All of the few pupils who have English as an additional language can communicate effectively but receive some extra support for speaking and writing.

At the last inspection in September 2003 the school was designated as having 'serious weaknesses' in its provision. Since then a new headteacher has been appointed and intensive support provided by the local authority.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an effective and improving school providing sound value for money. In the last year, standards have substantially improved and the achievement of the majority of pupils is now satisfactory, which was not the case at the last inspection. Consequently, the designation that the school has serious weaknesses no longer exists.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. By the end of the Reception Year, children's knowledge and skills are close to those expected for their age. The satisfactory progress through the rest of the school means that by Year 2 most pupils are also reaching standards close to those expected.

The school has improved quickly because of the strong leadership of the headteacher. Soon after arriving, she very realistically evaluated those areas that needed to improve and was able to motivate the staff into raising the quality of their teaching and so develop pupils' learning. Pupils are now encouraged to think for themselves, to write more independently and to apply their mathematical skills, though they still have some way to go in these areas. By evolving a shared policy about how the pupils' behaviour should be better managed, the leadership has ensured that the pupils' personal development and their care and welfare are good.

All staff have a clear understanding about what the pupils can achieve and that standards can rise still further. They are aware that teaching, while satisfactory, is still somewhat inconsistent and this needs to be addressed if pupils are to achieve at the highest level. Overall, much has been achieved in a short space of time and the plans for the future demonstrate a good capacity for the school to go from strength to strength.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on the successful improvements in teaching and learning so that pupils raise their standards in English, particularly writing, and in applying the skills and knowledge they acquire in mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Since the last inspection, achievement has greatly improved and is now satisfactory for all groups of pupils. Children make good progress in the reception classes and by the start of Year 1 are working within the levels expected nationally.

Through Years 1 and 2, progress is satisfactory. Pupils in Year 2 are reaching standards just below those expected for their age. Standards in national tests, previously low, improved dramatically in 2005. The results in reading, writing and mathematics were broadly average and the school's realistic predictions indicate that they are likely to improve further in 2006.

In this context of improvement, the school is not complacent about the need to ensure all ability groups of pupils are consistently challenged. Already, the effect of the focus on improving writing across the curriculum and problem solving in mathematics is evident in pupils' work. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, for instance, pupils knew that the work on adjectives would help them to make their writing more exciting and resulted in high quality job applications to be a princess. Links between speaking and listening, word problems and investigation in science are making learning relevant and challenging. This provides a way for pupils to practise their basic skills and is starting to raise achievement, particularly of the lower and middle ability pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have good attitudes to their work because they understand the purpose of their learning. They grow in confidence through teachers' praise and appreciation. The school has worked hard with parents to improve attendance, which is now in line with national averages.

The personal and social education programme successfully helps pupils to reflect on their own feelings and to solve problems. The playground 'helping hands' and the school council further develop pupils' capacity to take responsibility and recommend areas for improvement, such as clarifying the rules for games. This all makes for an orderly and harmonious school. Visitors to the school include representatives from 'Guide Dogs for the Blind' and local churches. Pupils understand how to contribute to the outside community; for instance, at Christmas, they went carol singing at a residential home.

The pupils understand about healthy eating and how to keep fit. Many eat fruit during the day, choose salads for lunch and actively want to participate in physical activities such as football and dance clubs.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The leadership team has prioritised improvements well and ensured that all pupils are now taught at least satisfactorily. The quantity of good teaching is increasing and the level of unsatisfactory teaching is now negligible, as shown in the analysis of the extensive monitoring of teaching and learning that has taken place. Improved teaching has been the major contributory factor in raising pupils' achievement during the last year. The most consistent teaching is in the Foundation Stage and it is here where pupils make the most progress. Through the rest of the school, there are also some examples of good teaching which, as the school recognises, provides other teachers with 'an understanding of what makes a good lesson'.

Work in books shows that previous weaknesses, for example, relating to assessment and over-direction by teachers, are being successfully addressed. Pupils are now expected to think more themselves, work independently and to make real connections between subjects. Teachers make sure that pupils are clear about what they are going to learn by good marking and individual targets. For example, one pupil's writing had a label attached which stated 'I am going to write 2 good sentences.' As a result of these initiatives, all ability groups are generally making similar levels of progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum has recently been extensively revised to make it less segmented. It now makes effective links between different subjects and is more relevant to pupils' own experiences. Teachers are still coming to terms with this different approach but pupils speak enthusiastically about what they are learning. They are more motivated to research information, to ask questions and take an active part in their own learning. All of this is raising their rates of both academic and personal progress.

Pupils are taught and encouraged to work safely and to take part in community events. In addition, visits, visitors and clubs all add to the enlivened activities and, in response to the concerns raised by pupils and parents, the school is trying hard to extend the range of these.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Adults in the school work hard to make sure that pupils are well cared for and safe. Health and safety and child protection procedures are reviewed regularly and understood by adults. The good links and involvement with a range of social, educational and health agencies ensure that pupils with learning or additional needs are identified early and given the support they need. Links with the pre-school group on the site are strong and include some joint activities for children. Joint training sessions with the junior school are leading to consistent approaches across the two schools and contribute to smooth transfer arrangements when pupils move to the next stage of their education.

Pupils' progress is tracked regularly and action taken, including the involvement of parents, if a pupil is seen to be underachieving. This information has also been analysed and used well to introduce additional group work, particularly in English and mathematics, to ensure that learning is set at an appropriately challenging level for all groups.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership of the headteacher and deputy head is good and, together with the strong sense of teamwork across the school, is a key factor in the school's rapid improvement. There is rigorous evaluation of the school's work, involving staff, governors, parents and pupils, and formal monitoring and observation of practice. External support has been used very well to inform this analysis so that the assessment of strengths and weaknesses is particularly astute. As a consequence, staff have agreed and prioritised a series of initiatives that will have the greatest impact on raising standards.

All the initiatives have had a positive effect, such as improvements in pupils' writing, behaviour and better use of practical work to make learning more interesting and relevant. Evaluations are also used well to plan for the ongoing professional development of staff and for suitable support when a need for improvement is identified in a specific area. There have been a number of recent appointments to the school. Induction and support for these new staff are very good and they feel fully integrated into the staff team.

Governors support the school well and have a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Finances are managed prudently to maximise value for money and to plan for change, such as a predicted fall in the school roll. The governing body has a clear vision for improvement and understands how it intends to achieve this. A good example of this was the governors' desire, when appointing the new headteacher, to choose someone who 'knows what success looks like'. They have succeeded in their aim.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for looking after us so well during our visit to your school. We enjoyed joining you in lessons and hearing about all the things you do. Some of you asked what we thought about your school so I have included a few of the points below.

- You told us you liked school. We can see that you behave well and enjoy your lessons. We could also see that you play well together from all the smiling faces of those using the parachute on that very cold day.
- Your teachers have worked hard to improve your lessons. From the books we looked at, we can see that you are able to have more chances to try out experiments and to work on your own. We think this is a good idea because you are learning more that way.
- The children in the reception classes are working particularly well considering how little time they have had at school.
- Those of you in Years 1 and 2 are also working much better since your teachers have been able to give you work that makes you think harder. This means that you are all making the progress that you should but we think there is still some room for improvement, particularly in reading, writing and number work. Then you will be better prepared when you move on to your next school.
- All the staff look after you well and since your headteacher came last year she has made sure that everybody works on those things that will make the most difference to you.

Finally, we hope you enjoy the rest of your time at Barnsole Infants and, although it is a long way in the future, hope you do well when you leave school.