

Barton Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118392
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	291121
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Carole Skinner

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Una Mills
Headteacher	Mark Dawson
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2007
School address	Barton Road Dover CT16 2ND
Telephone number	01304 201643
Fax number	01304 214725

Age group	7–11
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2007
Inspection number	291121

© Crown copyright 2007

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

The school draws most of its pupils from an area where there are significant levels of deprivation. More than a quarter of the pupils have learning or behavioural difficulties. Attainment on entry to the school is well below average. The number of pupils who are at an early stage of learning to speak English is growing but is not significantly different from the national average. The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school during the course of each year is much higher than in most schools. There has been an exceptionally high turnover of teachers during the past few years. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are leaving the school at the end of the current school year. The local authority has appointed an advisory headteacher to lead the school in the autumn term 2007 until a permanent appointment can be made. It has also seconded an experienced teacher from another school to fulfil the role of deputy headteacher on a temporary basis.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

Since its last inspection, the school has experienced significant difficulties in recruiting and retaining high quality teachers and experienced senior managers. Very frequent staff changes and a high turnover of pupils have had a detrimental effect on pupils' progress and have slowed the pace of improvement. Standards have remained exceptionally low for several years and there is widespread underachievement amongst all groups of pupils as a result of several years of inadequate teaching. In the last six months, however, there has been a marked improvement in the quality of teaching and learning as a result of staff changes and rigorous and systematic monitoring and support from school leaders and external advisers. Teaching is now satisfactory in Years 3 to 5, and consistently good in Year 6. This is helping the oldest pupils to make up lost ground, but teaching in other years is not yet strong enough to accelerate pupils' learning at a sufficiently fast pace.

Recently appointed teachers with leadership roles have begun to restructure the curriculum in order to provide teachers with clearer guidance for planning activities that build on pupils' previous learning. At present, the curriculum is inadequate because it is not planned well enough to ensure good progress in learning, especially in the three mixed-age classes. There is too little guidance to assist teachers in their planning, especially those who are new to the school, and this gives rise to inconsistencies and gaps in pupils' learning.

The school has focused successfully on improving pupils' personal development and behaviour, and these are now satisfactory. Pupils are showing more enjoyment in learning more because lessons engage them more effectively. Many pupils behave well and are helping to create a calm and orderly atmosphere in lessons and around the school. As a result of effective strategies for dealing with disruptive behaviour, the school is steadily reducing the number of exclusions. However, there is still a minority of pupils whose unacceptable behaviour sometimes disrupts lessons and is intimidating to others. A recent increase in the number of trained support staff has contributed to the satisfactory quality of care, support and guidance that pupils are given. The procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress have been sharpened up so that school leaders and teachers are able to spot early signs of underachievement and provide additional support for pupils who need it.

Despite these recent improvements, the school's leadership and management are not effective enough. The headteacher has maintained an unswerving focus on improving the quality of education for the pupils and has developed systematic and rigorous monitoring systems that provide accurate information about the school's performance. But the high turnover of teachers has made it very difficult to develop a successful team approach to overcoming the school's shortcomings. Few teachers have stayed at the school long enough to oversee the implementation of new initiatives. The recent appointment of two experienced senior teachers is a move in the right direction, but the imminent departure of the headteacher and deputy headteacher signals a further period of upheaval for staff and pupils. Governors are not sufficiently effective in challenging the school to improve.

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish an effective senior leadership team and develop the management skills of teachers and governors to ensure a dynamic team approach to improving all aspects of the school's performance.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum so that they are consistently good throughout the school in order to raise standards, accelerate pupils' progress, eliminate the minority of unacceptable behaviour, and overcome underachievement amongst pupils of all abilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards have declined further since the last inspection and have been exceptionally low for the last three years in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' weak basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are a barrier to their future success and economic well-being. The school is struggling to overcome several years of significant underachievement amongst pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties. Its efforts have been severely hampered by the lack of continuity in teaching. In the past, weak teaching and inadequate use of assessment information have hindered pupils' progress. The recent introduction of challenging targets for all pupils in English and mathematics and more rigorous assessments of their progress are beginning to have a positive influence. Teachers are now able to detect signs of underachievement at an early stage. However, as these systems are fairly new, their impact on raising standards has not been proven and pupils continue to make less progress than they are capable of.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

A successful focus on improving pupils' personal development has paid dividends. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, but there is still scope for improvement in the way the school promotes their appreciation of cultural diversity. Pupils have appropriate opportunities to take responsibility, for example as play leaders and prefects. The school council makes suggestions for improving the school and represents pupils' views well. Pupils wrote to the local authority to express their concerns about the safety risks caused by the poor quality of the playground. Most pupils say they feel safe at school. A few report that bullying still occurs on occasions but records show that it has reduced significantly in the past year. Some find the Green Room helpful as a temporary refuge for 'cooling off' and learning to control their anger. Pupils appreciate the importance of a healthy diet and many take good advantage of the wide range of sporting activities on offer at playtimes and after school. Attendance is well below the national average. This is mainly as a result of high absence levels among a few transient pupils who do not speak English as their first language. The profile of attendance for the majority of pupils is much closer to the average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school has invested much time and effort into eliminating the inadequate teaching that has been so detrimental to pupils' progress in the past. Recently, local authority advisers and specialist teachers have provided effective support in monitoring and supporting staff in order to improve the quality of pupils' learning. Several parents expressed concerns about the levels of disruptive behaviour in lessons. Teachers are now managing this more successfully so that there are fewer interruptions to learning. Through sharper assessment procedures, they are also getting better at pitching work at different levels to meet pupils' specific needs. However, teachers' marking does not always show pupils how to improve their work. The recent appointment of additional teaching assistants has helped to provide appropriate support for the high proportion of pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties in each class. However, in some classes support staff are not sufficiently involved with pupils during the whole-class sessions. In Year 6, where teaching and learning are consistently good, lessons are challenging and well paced and engage pupils fully in their own learning. These good features are evident in some lessons in other year groups, but they are not yet consistent enough to accelerate pupils' progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

A key factor in the pupils' inadequate progress is that the curriculum is not planned well enough to meet the wide range of pupils' needs, capabilities and interests. The guidelines for each subject are not sufficiently well structured to ensure clear progression in pupils' learning from year to year. It has not been modified carefully enough to provide sufficient challenge for pupils in mixed age and ability classes in Years 3 and 4. There is a lack of precision in curricular planning to support the progress of pupils with specific learning difficulties. Very recent initiatives to redesign the curriculum around key skills that can be transferred across subjects have taken second place to the more urgent need to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Improvements in these areas have been slow to take effect. For example, guided reading has only recently been introduced in all classes and there are not enough opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills in other subjects. Satisfactory personal, social and health education helps to increase pupils' confidence and self-esteem and improve their behaviour and relationships. A good variety of after-school activities also helps to develop sound personal qualities and raise fitness levels among pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Adults provide sound levels of care and support for pupils and are committed to ensuring their safety and well-being. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place, but some aspects for improvement have been brought to the school's attention. Training in behaviour management techniques, the use of the Green Room for temporary respite, and counselling for pupils who are unable to manage their own behaviour have greatly reduced the impact of disruptive behaviour in lessons. The arrangements for supporting pupils who are removed from lessons for longer periods are not always effective in ensuring that good quality learning takes place during these times of exclusion. Pupils now have clear and measurable targets in English and

mathematics and most teachers are making sound use of these to monitor pupils' progress. Improved systems for tracking each pupil's progress throughout the year are being used effectively by school leaders to highlight pupils who are not doing as well as they should be. These arrangements have not been in place long enough to have had a measurable impact on pupils' achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The leadership and management of the school have not been sufficiently successful in improving the quality of education on offer since the last inspection. Consequently, standards are too low and pupils continue to make slow progress in acquiring basic knowledge and skills. Through their regular observations of lessons and analysis of assessment data, school leaders have an accurate and realistic view of the school's effectiveness and know exactly where improvement is needed. Their efforts have been hampered because few teachers have stayed at the school long enough to implement and assess the impact of new initiatives. This has had a particularly detrimental effect on the improvement of pupils' literacy skills over the past few years. Parents have expressed considerable concern about the lack of stability for their children, some of whom have had as many as seven different teachers in a year. The school has also experienced difficulty in recruiting governors, with the result that the governing body is significantly under strength. Although governors are becoming increasingly involved in checking how well the school is doing, they do not provide sufficient challenge or have enough impact on bringing about improvement.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

Annex A**Leadership and management**

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Barton Junior School, Dover, CT16 2ND

We enjoyed meeting you when we visited your school and would like to thank you for talking to us and showing us your work. The teachers and many of your parents do not think that you are making as much progress as you could, and they are right. Your progress is too slow in reading, writing and mathematics and the standards you achieve are far too low for your age. We are recommending that the school has extra support through what is known as 'special measures' for a while to help it to improve at a faster rate than it is doing at the moment. A large part of the problem has been the number of different teachers that many of you have had during the course of a year. This is unsettling for you and has not helped the people who run the school to carry out their plans to improve your learning.

Since January, your lessons have been getting better. Your teachers have given you targets to aim for and they are planning work that will help you to achieve them. They also have better systems to check on how well you are doing and to give you extra support when you need it. All these things are quite new so they have not really had time to make a difference yet. One thing has made a difference. Your behaviour has improved and most of you pay attention to your teachers and try hard to do well. This is helping your teachers to make your lessons more interesting and challenging for you. One of the reasons why you have not been making enough progress is that the curriculum is not planned well enough to make sure that you learn things every year that build on what you learned the year before. The teachers have started to improve this but the new curriculum plans are not finished yet. The adults make sure that you stay safe and help you if you are having problems. They also run lots of clubs that many of you enjoy and that help you to keep fit and get on well together.

More inspectors will be visiting the school during the next year to check on how well it is making progress. Please do all you can to help your teachers in the months ahead, especially by behaving well and working hard in every lesson.

Yours faithfully

Carole Skinner Lead inspector