

North Borough Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118301
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312876
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Timothy Feast

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	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dan Abnett
Headteacher	Christine Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2004
School address	Peel Street Maidstone ME14 2BP
Telephone number	01622 754708
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

North Borough is an average size junior school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) in each year group is well above the national average. Most pupils come from White British family backgrounds but nearly a fifth of pupils are of Asian descent. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not believed to be English is well above the national average. Most year groups have considerably more pupils of one gender than the other; overall, there are more boys than girls. There are some significant pockets of deprivation in the school's catchment area.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

North Borough is a good and improving school that meets the challenging needs of its pupils well. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and school leaders demonstrate a good capacity to continue this improvement.

Pupils enter the school with attainment that is lower than average and with a high proportion of them having additional learning and social needs. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, standards are in line with national averages. Standards in English, mathematics and science have risen since the last inspection and to a greater extent than the improvement nationally in all three subjects. The current achievement of pupils is good, with a small minority making outstanding progress. This progress reflects the good teaching they receive. Teachers plan well to meet the specific needs of the pupils in their classes. They also track the progress of individual pupils carefully, so that those in danger of underachieving are identified and are provided with good support. There is a lack of consistency, though, in some teachers' setting of homework and in implementing the school's procedures for assessing pupils' learning in lessons. Curriculum changes have also contributed to the improvement in pupils' progress. Creative links between subjects and a more active and investigative approach to learning in mathematics and science are making the curriculum more interesting and relevant for pupils. Pupils report that they enjoy these changes; 'they make lessons fun' was the comment of one. An extensive range of clubs, visits and visitors enriches the good curriculum and both parents and pupils are appreciative of what these activities have to offer.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils say they really like coming to school and parents agree. They are keen to adopt healthy lifestyles and to act in a safe and responsible manner. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. Whilst the majority of pupils behave well, a small minority find it difficult to keep to school rules. However, this poor behaviour is managed effectively by the school so that the impact on the learning of others is minimised. Pupils respond well to opportunities to take on responsibilities. The pastoral care and support given to pupils is good overall. Good academic guidance helps pupils to understand how to improve their learning to meet their targets and as a result, they make faster progress.

Leadership and management are good. School leaders have been successful in developing an effective school since the last inspection. This is based on good team work and the emergence of a very clear direction, supported by good strategic planning. There is equal focus on accelerating the rate of progress whilst valuing all children so that they all may succeed. Although school leaders monitor the quality of provision thoroughly, there is insufficient routine analysis of assessment information to give all leaders a clear picture of how well different groups of pupils are doing.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine the procedures for analysing assessment information to identify more clearly the academic progress made by different groups of pupils.
- Ensure that all teachers implement consistently the school's policies on homework and on the assessment of pupils' learning in lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards in the Year 6 national tests in 2007 improved considerably on the previous year's results and were broadly average, although better in mathematics and science than in English. After a period when pupils' progress was satisfactory, current achievement is good, with pupils in all years making good progress towards the challenging targets set by the school. Current attainment is in line with national expectations. The attainment in mathematics and science is still higher than in English, although the gap is narrowing. The higher standards in mathematics and science reflect the successful impact of the more active and investigative approaches to the subjects, whilst the improving picture in English reflects the positive impact of the school's current focus on literacy. Pupils with LDD and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well because of the well-targeted support they receive. Good progress in acquiring key skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) prepares pupils well for their next stage of education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Parents are generally very positive about the improvements in their children's personal development whilst at the school. A typical comment from a parent was, 'My child has really grown in confidence since September 2007.' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength and pupils respond very well to the wide range of opportunities provided. Pupils are generally friendly, polite and work well with each other and with adults. They are very ready to engage with others of different cultural backgrounds. The pupils enjoy and benefit from the school's excellent partnership with the local Gurkha regiment, for example, showing their delight when sampling Nepalese cuisine and dancing. Attendance for most pupils is good, but for some it is hindered by family circumstances and attendance overall is satisfactory.

Pupils feel safe, know there is always someone to talk to and believe that the school deals effectively with the rare incidents of bullying. Pupils and parents report that behaviour is improving but the school's information still shows that the behaviour of a small minority of pupils is poor on occasions and is related particularly to their inability to accept adult instructions. Pupils are very active and very positive about adopting healthy lifestyles. They contribute well to the school community through a range of roles of responsibility, such as peer mediators, and by improving the school environment. They are involved with an extensive range of local and international activities and charities, summed up by the display 'We come from all over the world'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. Pupils now benefit from a broad base of good teaching. Staff plan well to meet the full range of differing needs in their lessons and as a result, pupils make good progress. Teachers use a good range of strategies to ensure that pupils are engaged most of the time and all staff deal well with pupils who have behavioural difficulties. Expectations have been raised as to what pupils can achieve and staff are using a more investigative and creative approach well to help them meet these

expectations. Learning assistants play an important role in extending pupils' learning, especially when working with small groups of pupils who need specific support. Class work is regularly marked and there is an improving focus on strategies such as peer and self-assessment by pupils but this is not yet consistent in all lessons. Some teachers draw learning together well at the end of lessons to help pupils assess their own progress, but this is not consistent in all classes. Whilst there are examples of good practice within the school, pupils and parents report some inconsistencies in the setting and marking of homework.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils in all years enjoy access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, which meets their needs well. Pupils' progress has benefited from the recent improvements to the curriculum. The adoption of the new national frameworks for literacy and numeracy has had a positive impact, for example, on the motivation of pupils, particularly seen in the boys' writing. French and Spanish have been added to the curriculum. There is good provision for pupils to use ICT to enhance learning across the curriculum. There is a strong emphasis on a 'hands on' approach to learning with increased opportunities for problem solving and investigative work in science and mathematics.

Pupils' enjoyment and learning have been enhanced considerably by the good and increasing programme of themed days and weeks, the contribution of 'inspirational' visitors, including the scriptwriter for 'Doctor Who', and by a wide range of relevant visits. Parents and pupils are appreciative of these extensive opportunities and pupils respond well by good attendance at extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This area is a strength of the school's work, acknowledged by both parents and pupils. One pupil commented, 'This school makes us feel special.' The support for vulnerable pupils and those who find learning difficult is outstanding and enables pupils to make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in their personal development. Pupils receive specific guidance on what they must do to improve the standard of their work and, as a result, they make good progress. Pupils have targets in literacy and numeracy but not yet in science and other subjects in all year groups. The school's academic tracking procedures are relatively new and are having a good impact on raising the expectations of both staff and pupils. New pupils settle well and quickly to school expectations and routines and this is helped by the good partnership with the main contributory infant school. The school's systems for managing pupils' behaviour are effective and ensure that the vast majority of pupils behave well in school. Pupils benefit from the expertise provided by an extensive range of external agencies, with which the school enjoys very positive relationships, for example the local support groups for gifted and talented children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's leadership is focused relentlessly on raising standards and improving provision. The school has demonstrated a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses through the good improvement it has made since the last inspection, though school leaders are modest

about the extent of the school's more recent progress. The headteacher, appointed in September 2006, has established an effective senior leadership team, which has worked well to accelerate the rate of school improvement, particularly in the last year. Staff turnover has reduced considerably over the past two years and this has helped to create greater consistency in the quality of teaching. Curriculum changes have resulted in improved achievement and rising standards. Changes such as the appointment of a family liaison officer and the establishment of a nurture class for Years 3, 4 and 5 pupils have contributed positively to pupils' personal and academic development. There is now a full governing body that is very supportive of the school, and is beginning to develop fully its role as a 'critical friend'. Leaders monitor the quality of provision, such as teaching, well. The new monitoring procedures are effective in tracking individual pupils' progress and identifying appropriate support where necessary. The analysis of assessment information is not sufficiently rigorous or systematic. It does not provide a clear enough picture of the relative progress made by different groups of pupils, or of the progress pupils make in different subjects during the course of an academic year.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of North Borough Junior School, Maidstone, ME14 2BP

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently and for letting us join you in lessons to look at your work. We enjoyed our talks with you. You were really positive about most aspects of your school and what is provided for you.

We think North Borough is a good and improving school. We were impressed with the progress you are now making. We think generally you behave well but a small number of you misbehave quite often. We think the school deals well with these pupils. You clearly enjoy school, and understand well how to keep yourselves safe, fit and healthy, for example by enjoying all the physical activities offered to you. We think the changes the school has made to the curriculum have increased your enjoyment and as a result you are making better progress. Teaching is good and is helped by the good relationships you have with the adults in your class. Both you and your parents told us how well the school looks after and supports you. We have asked the school to make sure teachers give you the opportunity to demonstrate more regularly how much progress you have made in lessons.

Your school has improved greatly since the last inspection because of the good leadership of staff. We have asked school leaders to look more carefully at how well different groups of you are doing in the different subjects.

With best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Tim Feast Lead inspector