

# West Borough Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118568
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	312995
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Collard

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	380
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Hooper
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ashley Crittenden
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 June 2003
<b>School address</b>	Greenway Maidstone ME16 8QH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01622 726391
<b>Fax number</b>	01622 729512

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school serves a mixed area on the outskirts of the town. There is a higher-than-average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and or disabilities. The mobility of pupils is high; in some years, over a third of pupils have changed since the class started in the Foundation Stage. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award.

After the previous headteacher left in 2004, the school went through a period of severe disruption, during which there were seven acting headteachers. The present headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed 15 months ago and a completely new senior management structure was started in September 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school provides an adequate quality of education and there are very significant signs of improvement since the appointment of the new leadership team. After a three-year period, during which the school lost direction, there is now a new sense of purpose and pupils' achievement is rising. The senior team is demonstrating a good capacity to move the school forward rapidly. Through all the turbulence of the past, pastoral support for the pupils remained strong. As a result, the personal development and well-being of pupils are good. Academically, the progress of children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 pupils continued to improve but the achievements of those in the upper part of the school fell. There are new and exciting plans being implemented and staff have been very willing to embrace the change. All this hard work can be seen in the much-improved and satisfactory progress that all pupils are now making. As one parent remarked, 'The school has become much more focused since the new headteacher arrived and the atmosphere is very positive.'

From below average ability when they start, children progress well in the Nursery and Reception classes, where the provision is good. By the time they start Year 1, achievement has been good and pupils are working just slightly below the standards expected for their age. By the end of Year 2, all evidence shows that pupils are working solidly at the levels expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics. Here, standards in national tests have been steadily rising since 2003, confirming that the issue from the last report concerning low standards in the infants has been successfully addressed. The major impact from the previous instability was most noticeable in the achievement of pupils by Year 6, where national test results in particular declined. Because of the improved teaching, higher expectations of what pupils are capable of and much better planning of lessons, this low achievement is being stemmed for those now in Years 3 to 6. Analysis of the internal data and pupils' work shows that many pupils are progressing at the rates expected of them, with an increasing number rapidly catching up on lost ground. However, there is still some inconsistency. This occurs when learning is not extended through the good use of assessment, such as in marking or in providing pupils with the correct level of work for their ability.

The leadership team has a very clear vision of what more needs to be done and how it will be achieved. This follows a good self-evaluation of the school's position and a shared improvement plan that has enabled all staff and governors to understand the part they will play in moving the school forward. Plans already underway include an overhaul of the curriculum to ensure that better links are made across all subjects and to the core life skills in writing, independent learning and numeracy. Pupils at risk of underachievement are identified and being given substantial levels of support. In addition, close monitoring of teaching has identified where there is variability and high-level support is ensuring that the inconsistencies are being addressed. This has been beneficial to the high proportion of pupils who have joined the school since the Foundation Stage. All this is having an impact on pupils' academic standards but, because of the short time it has been happening, it is taking time to have the fullest effect. This is the main reason why the school's provision dipped between inspections and has not improved as much as it might have done.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

In the Nursery class, children are well behaved and eager to participate. They respond well to the good teaching in a friendly and productive environment. Their own experiences are extended through pertinent activities, which allow them to explore and become engaged on their own, with adults and with each other. This continues through the Reception classes as they are carefully introduced to work that is more formal. This is not at the expense of opportunities for play, which enable children to learn for themselves. Work is matched well to all levels of ability and extends their previously gained knowledge. Thorough assessment takes place regularly. The school has rightly identified that the next step is to develop rigorous systems of collecting evidence, particularly in the Reception Year, to provide a benchmark for individual progress through the rest of the school.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics for pupils in Years 3 to 6 by improving the links between subjects and extending opportunities to use writing and numeracy skills.
- Ensure pupils make consistent progress by raising the quality of all teaching to that of the best.
- Improve the achievement of pupils by using assessment information more consistently in lessons.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

The steadily improving standards and good progress by Year 2 are the result of the consistently good teaching throughout Key Stage 1 over a number of years. In reading, writing and mathematics, standards are slightly above those expected for pupils' ages, although the rate of improvement over the last three years in mathematics has been more variable. It is in Key Stage 2 where there has been the most adverse impact from the instability because teaching in the past, as seen in the analysis from the school's monitoring, was not as strong as it should have been. Here, standards in the Year 6 national tests had fallen to an all-time low by 2007, even though progress in some other year groups had been good. Since the start of this year, there has been a great improvement, enabling pupils to make at least satisfactory progress in all years. Evidence, particularly in pupils' written work, is sufficiently secure to confirm that over three quarters of those presently in Year 6 are reaching standards that are in line with those expected and over a quarter are doing better. This is because the good foundations that were laid while in Year 5 are now being successfully built upon. Just as importantly, different ability groups are all making better progress because of the intensive support they are receiving.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils behave well and enjoy taking part in the activities they are given. They enthusiastically become involved in the increasing number of responsibilities available to them, such as through the school council and peer mentoring. This is reflected in the improved attendance since the

last inspection. It is only on the few occasions when teaching is more mundane that they lose interest or concentration and 'opt out' of the group work. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe, fit and healthy. For instance, in science books, there are examples of pupils explaining what they need to do to make sure that they are not exposed to dangerous chemicals, and at lunchtime, some pupils explained why they had been eating fruit and what the ingredients were in yoghurts. One year group has been developing role play about arguments for and against battery chickens, which provided good links to improving speaking, listening and written work in English. Pupils' contribution to their own and the wider community is satisfactory, as seen by their involvement in fundraising.

Pupils make satisfactory development in their understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural matters. Recently, an interesting exercise has been undertaken on racism in conjunction with students from a local secondary school. This has provided a good opportunity for pupils to understand their own feelings about this important topic. Pupils learning French are introduced to the differences between cultures, which has been aided by a trip to the country as well.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching is consistently good through the Foundation Stage and good overall in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 to 6, the teaching, while satisfactory overall, is not as consistent, although it is getting better. Comparing previous internal monitoring with that undertaken this academic year, there has clearly been a positive effect from the good professional support. This has raised the quality of teaching and learning not only in the upper years but also throughout the rest of the school. Common strengths include ensuring all pupils understand what they will be learning and how well this has been achieved by the end of the lesson. Behaviour management is good. Relevant activities provide strong links, particularly helping to improve writing standards. Planning, while rigorous, does not follow a common format, as new systems are being tested. It does not always identify how intensive individual support will be directed to different abilities or how the highest level of challenge will be developed. Consequently, teachers' questioning does not always make pupils think hard about their answers so that they can use their knowledge when they start recording their answers. When this happens, it results in satisfactory rather than good lessons.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is suitably broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of the pupils. Good use is made of themed weeks such as the 'Brain Awareness' week and 'Maths' day held recently. These, along with various visits, have helped pupils become more engaged in their learning. The specialist teaching of music and modern foreign languages has been another good way of extending the learning opportunities. The previous lack of a more creative approach to planning has hindered pupils from becoming more independent in their learning. Although still at an early stage, the school is rightly focusing on making sure that there are sufficient links between subjects to help raise standards in writing, numeracy and information and communication technology. Hence, pupils are adequately prepared for their future economic well-being. While

there are some opportunities provided, older pupils correctly say that they would like to become involved in more extra-curricular activities and clubs.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The strong pastoral support is evident in the clear safeguarding procedures, the good quality of adult intervention and in the confidence with which pupils are able to share their concerns. Parents express confidence in the school and most feel able to approach the school should they have problems. Pupils say that since the arrival of the new headteacher, the school actively promotes good behaviour. They are not worried about bullying and say that on the very few occasions that it does happen, incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. This is because the leadership team has implemented strong behaviour management policies with procedures that are clear to everybody. Systems for analysing academic guidance have been significantly strengthened over the last year. Prior to this, it had been very difficult to provide rapid intervention when underachievement occurred because information was not shared well enough and was exacerbated by the high level of mobility. Targets for each pupil are now commonplace and pupils are aware of what they need to do next. However, the use of this data is still at an early stage of development. Consistently high quality marking is not yet embedded or helping refine the daily planning in some classes.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

After a period of instability, the headteacher, supported well by the deputy headteacher and senior management team, is providing the school with strong, determined leadership and giving clear direction with a new sense of purpose. The middle managers are increasing their level of responsibility although, because many are inexperienced, much of the work on whole-school development relies on a few people. Nevertheless, morale is high and staff are happily and effectively changing their routines. There is a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and leaders have identified very appropriate priorities to bring about the rapid changes that were needed. As a result, pupils' academic progress, especially in the upper years, has significantly improved. Monitoring of teaching has helped introduce a higher proportion of 'good' lessons, although there is still more to do to reduce the variability. The governors are supportive and clear about what needs to be done. Since gaining information that is more comprehensive in scope, they have started to provide a level of challenge that was not apparent until recently. As one said, 'We now bounce ideas back and forwards with confidence.' Realistic targets have been set for the future based on a thorough analysis of pupils' and teachers' performance. In addition, as more information has become available, so the school improvement plan has been revised. However, the criteria for knowing when developments have been successful are not specific enough.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

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

### 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	3
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	2
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	3

### 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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

19 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of West Borough Primary School, Maidstone ME16 8QH

Thank you for looking after us so well during our recent visit. We enjoyed meeting you all and finding out about your school. As I promised some of you, I am listing the main points of the report below.

- You told us how much things have changed for the better in the last couple of years and we agree. We have said that you are getting a satisfactory quality of education and that there are some good improvements happening.
- We have said that you behave well and know who to turn to with any problems. This is because you are looked after and cared for well.
- Those of you in the youngest classes are doing well. You are being well prepared for when you move into Year 1.
- You make satisfactory progress through the school. The standards in the national tests have been improving in Year 2 but not in Year 6. The many things that have been changed since your new headteacher arrived have helped make sure that those of you now in Year 6 are achieving satisfactorily. We have asked your teachers to make sure that standards in English, mathematics and science, in particular, continue to rise.
- All your teachers are working hard to make sure that you make consistent progress through all years, even though, at the moment, there is some variability. We also agree with you that you have some good lessons and we can see that you enjoy the work you are given. We have asked that more lessons can be like this.
- We enjoyed hearing about the new targets you are given and it is good to see that you understand what they mean. We have asked your teachers to make sure that when they carry out marking or assess how well you are doing that this information is used better to provide you with work that is even more challenging.

Your headteacher and her staff have many exciting things planned for the future. This will help to make your school even better. You can help by continuing to behave well, working hard and suggesting things to improve.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely David Collard (Lead inspector)