

Barton Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118392
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	322737
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Patricia Davies

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	John Peall
Principal	Christopher Russell
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2007
School address	Barton Road Dover CT16 2ND
Telephone number	01304 201643
Fax number	01304 214725

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most of the pupils attending Barton School come from White British families. A very small minority are learning to speak English as an additional language. A high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which includes behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

When the school was inspected in June 2007, it was judged to require special measures. The school was led by an acting headteacher from September 2007. In November 2007, the school became part of the Dover Federation of the Arts, which has a single governing body. A permanent head of school took up post at Barton in January 2008. There have been some further changes to staff, including appointments to subject and other senior leadership positions.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The overall effectiveness of Barton is now satisfactory. Improvement has moved on at a brisk pace in recent months, aided by close support from the local authority and the many resources to hand through the federation. Much hard work has secured good leadership and management, an acceptable standard of education, and satisfactory achievement. Most telling of all is the response of pupils, who notice a real difference in the school. Pupils understand why things needed to change for the better and are quite clear that they have. The school's exploration of parental opinion shows that its parents also view the school more favourably than when their feelings were canvassed earlier this year. While progress as a whole is now satisfactory for most pupils, and sometimes good, the school recognises that it still has a way to go, and most particularly to ensure the consistently rapid progress needed to raise attainment. While standards at the lower end of the school are broadly average, those at Year 6 remain low in English, mathematics and science.

The governing body has deployed resources effectively both in support of Barton's short term needs and to set in place a firm educational infrastructure for the future. Key among the school's many improvements has been its internal refurbishment. The visual impact of freshly painted classrooms and corridors quickly lifted morale and has created a bright and cheerful learning environment. The federation's funding of a school uniform also gave pupils a sense of pride and identity. Improvements to behaviour earlier in the school year have been maintained more recently through rapid intervention in lessons to help those with more challenging behaviour. At the same time, the wider pastoral support for pupils and families has been strengthened. Consequently, lessons and learning are no longer significantly disrupted by poor behaviour and all pupils have the chance to make the best of their education. Attendance has risen and is now close to the national average. Better attendance not only reflects pupils' increased enthusiasm but also means that pupils gain more frequently from the school's opportunities in readiness for later life.

Improved planning gives teaching a solid foundation. This factor, along with the recent rigorous monitoring of lessons, has gradually increased the proportion of good teaching and made inroads into shortcomings. At their most successful, lessons have an element of excitement and challenge that create interest and independence and, therefore, motivate pupils to do well. These vital ingredients are not yet present in all teaching and learning, or in provision as a whole. As a result, the curriculum and the overall quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory, rather than good.

Better assessment has been another important step forward and forms a key part of the school's good quality care, guidance and support. Pupils' progress is checked more frequently so that staff know where to intervene or make changes to planning. This information has been vital to senior and middle leaders within the school for planning the way forward. The school has a clear sense of direction, but some of its evaluations of its performance have been overly positive. This is because leaders have yet to draw together all their monitoring information and sharply analyse the impact of their work in order to reach a balanced and realistic view of the school's performance and refine targets for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish consistently rapid progress throughout all year groups in order to raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure lessons and the curriculum have the necessary excitement and challenge to create the interest and independent learning that motivate pupils to do well.
- Make better use of monitoring information to assess the impact of initiatives, gain a realistic view of the school's effectiveness and sharpen targets for further improvement.

A small proportion of 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

Progress has gradually increased over the course of this school year so that pupils' achievement is now satisfactory, including that of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning to speak English for the first time. The very large majority of pupils are moving on at the expected rate, while some are making good progress, most particularly in Year 5. A greater proportion of good teaching, close checks on progress, and valuable adjustments to the curriculum all contribute to this growing improvement.

There is still some variability in the rate of progress, however. The school is keen to resolve these inconsistencies in order to eradicate the effects of past underachievement. This legacy is most marked with the oldest pupils, where improvements have not had enough time to make a substantial difference to their attainment. Consequently, standards in the current Year 6 remain low in English, mathematics and science. Pupils in Year 3 do not have the same ground to make up and there are clear signs in this group's broadly average attainment that the school's hard work is beginning to pay off.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

While pupils' personal skills and qualities remain satisfactory, pupils have improved a good deal in some important areas. Pupils confirm, for example, that poor behaviour is no longer an issue and bullying is a thing of the past. The great majority of pupils act sensibly and safely at work and play. Exclusions have fallen and this sanction is now used only when there is the occasional case of particularly challenging behaviour. Pupils are extremely positive about how the school has changed and are quick to praise improvements. The considerable rise in attendance reflects their good attitudes to school life.

Pupils feel they are listened to. They are able to share their views at the school council, and these meetings provide a valuable forum for them to contribute to the school community. Nevertheless, they do not yet have as many chances as they should to take responsibility as playground 'buddies' for example, or to lead school council meetings and record this group's decisions. Pupils know which foods make up a healthy diet, although many do not always select the healthy option at lunchtimes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although good teaching is not yet consistent, the proportion has increased so that many lessons are now taught well. Planning is to a common format, which clearly identifies the purpose of the lesson and adapts learning to the needs of different abilities. These plans and intentions are followed closely in lessons and ensure teaching is purposeful. Study support managers are quick to intervene to prevent any poor behaviour. Pupils identify this support as a key reason why lessons are calm and orderly. Increasingly, pupils are receiving helpful feedback about their work, although this practice is not yet common across all classes.

It is no surprise that pupils are motivated best when activities are stimulating and challenging and encourage them to be independent. This is not always the case however. Where lessons lack these elements of interest and excitement, progress is no greater than satisfactory. Indeed, a few pupils sometimes 'switch off' and lose attention, particularly in the classes containing the oldest pupils. Pupils too recognise these shortcomings and remark that they would like their lessons to be a lot more fun.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A core foundation of planning for English and mathematics ensures there is a close focus on teaching the basic literacy and numeracy skills that are crucial for adult life. Science also benefits from a systematic scheme of work for teachers to follow. In addition, staff are adapting planning to suit the needs of pupils, as a result of their analysis of assessment and test information. For example, there has been a valuable focus on calculation in response to these checks, which has helped to lift progress in mathematics.

Increasingly, the use of specialist teaching within the federation widens pupils' experience in art and science, as does the chance to visit other federation schools. At the same time, the school is considering how to make its curriculum more exciting and enriching so that topics create interest, make learning relevant to pupils' experience, and develop independent learning skills. There is now more attention to practical work in science for example and the school is turning its attention to problem solving in mathematics and the use of drama to improve the content of pupils' writing. These developments are at an early stage, as are those to draw on the potential of one subject to learn about another. Provision for pupils in need of additional support for their learning is improving further as the role of new study support managers grows and develops.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The consistent and effective management of challenging behaviour reflects the school's strong pastoral care, as does the success of its work to increase attendance. The federation's resources have been particularly beneficial, as they have provided temporary support for families and individual pupils while the school sought its own staff. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are thorough and robust. Pupils appreciate the impact of the school's guidance and support and say that the school is now a safe place to be.

Systems for recording and checking pupils' academic performance are equally strong. The school has now adopted an efficient computerised system for monitoring progress, analysing data and sharing it with staff. Much has been done to ensure greater confidence and accuracy in assessing attainment and to make judgements from pupils' work as well as test results. The expanding discussion among staff about standards and progress means that planning is refined more closely to pupils' needs, those in need of extra help are identified, and realistic targets are set for academic improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The pace, extent and success of improvement over the course of this school year, and most particularly since joining the federation, indicates that the school is well placed to move on. Staff are extremely enthusiastic and work as a strong and supportive team. The governing body has directed finances so that pupils, parents and staff can take pride in a fresh and attractive school environment and much improved facilities. Improvements to pupils' behaviour and attitudes have also successfully cleared the way for better learning for all pupils. Staff are gaining much from the increasing professional links across the federation that not only enhance their work at Barton, but also develop their leadership skills in a wider context. Governors have quickly developed their knowledge of the school so that they are well positioned to offer challenge as well as support.

Sharply focused support from the local authority has adapted to the changing needs of the school and to the increased confidence and autonomy of the school's leadership. Together with the head of school, local authority staff have worked alongside school leaders to develop monitoring skills and ensure that teaching is rigorously checked and improved. Responsibility for the school's improvement is shared now at all levels. New subject leaders have been quick to move forward and are already influencing present provision and planning future developments. The school is clear about its direction and its priorities are the right ones. Nevertheless, leaders have yet to marshal their information so that they can demonstrate fully what they have achieved, gain a considered understanding of the quality of their overall effectiveness, and sharpen planning further for the future.

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	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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	3
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?	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	3
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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

10 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Barton Junior School, Dover CT16 2ND

Thank you very much for welcoming us back to your school. What a surprise to see your wonderful new reception area and offices when we came through the front door! As you all know, when your school was inspected last year it was found to need a lot of improvement and was placed in 'special measures'. We have been coming back to check how things have been getting on and this time we found that everything was a lot better. As a result, we have been able to say that your school is now satisfactory. We were very pleased to hear that you could see a big difference too. All the staff and the governors have worked hard to improve things for you and to ensure your progress is satisfactory.

Here are some other important things about your school

- You think behaviour is much better and say lessons are not disrupted any more by poor behaviour – we agree.
- Many of your lessons are taught well, and when they are you do well, but this is not yet true of all of them.
- Many more of you come to school more often than before and this improvement shows that you like school a good deal.
- All the adults at school take good care of you and, importantly, check your progress carefully in order to help you make even faster progress than you do now.

This is what your school has been asked to do to make things even better

- Make sure all of you progress as quickly as possible in order to raise your standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure all your lessons are exciting and challenging and give you the skills to help you learn on your own.
- Look much more carefully at all the information they have about how the school is doing so that staff get a really clear and sharp picture about the school's effectiveness and what to do next.

Best wishes for the future and we hope that you all continue to enjoy school and work hard.

Yours sincerely Patricia Davies Lead inspector

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Lead inspector