

# Bethersden Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118372
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	326814
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Eileen Chadwick

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	135
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Nigel Hopwood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kate Harper
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 June 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Bethersden Ashford TN26 3AH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01233 820479
<b>Fax number</b>	01233 820646

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Bethersden Primary School is smaller than most primary schools. It serves a mixed population from a wide area as well as from the local village. Most children are White British. A small proportion comes from the Gypsy/Roma travelling community. An above average percentage of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These pupils' needs are mainly concerned with speech, literacy, emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a single-age Reception class. The other three classes also contain more than one age group. The headteacher was appointed two years ago and since then there have been other staff changes, including at senior level. The school has gained the Healthy Schools, ActiveMark and Eco Schools awards. On site, there is a privately run pre-school.

## 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 a satisfactory and improving school. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The headteacher provides clear direction and has established important systems to move the school forward. On her arrival, together with staff and governors, she evaluated the school's position and identified pupils' progress was too variable because of some weaknesses in teaching and because expectations of pupils' achievement were not always high enough. Staffing issues that have held back school improvement are quickly being resolved and pupils' progress is improving. The school has a secure knowledge of its strengths and clear plans to tackle weaker areas.

Reception children settle well as a result of a well-thought-out induction programme. Children make sound progress and standards are average by the time they leave Reception. They develop their speaking and phonics skills well. Generally satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 leads to average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Academic performance information shows that steps to improve teaching for more capable pupils are having a positive impact and standards are better this year at higher levels. However, progress is slower for lower attaining pupils, especially in reading, with too many boys not reaching satisfactory standards.

Satisfactory progress continues in Years 3 to 6 and, by the end of Year 6 standards are average in English and mathematics. Mathematics standards have improved over the past two years because initiatives to improve teaching and assessment are starting to have a positive impact. Improving science has not yet had the same focus and standards remain below average because there is little attainment at higher levels. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from Traveller families make satisfactory progress. The school knows some pupils should do better and, through a robust tracking system and catch-up programmes, is starting to remedy a backlog of underachievement by providing extra support.

The focus on improving teaching is having a positive impact and the quality of teaching is now satisfactory overall. However, occasionally, work is too easy for more capable pupils or hard for the lower attaining pupils, especially in reading in Key Stage 1. Most pupils behave well and enjoy school but a minority are easily distracted because low standards of literacy prevent them learning and making the most of their education. Pupils feel safe and well cared for and safeguarding arrangements meet current statutory requirements. The satisfactory curriculum largely meets pupils' needs and steps are being taken to make it more relevant and exciting. Pupils have a good understanding about being healthy and contribute well to the community, for example, through their recycling and other eco work.

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. Structures and systems have been overhauled to promote shared leadership and teamwork. The headteacher has tackled some outstanding issues with rigour. Middle leaders are well chosen and being trained to fulfil their monitoring roles. Some parents wrote to say they were pleased with the changes the headteacher was making but parents of some younger pupils are less satisfied with their children's progress and expressed some concern about behaviour. The inspection team agrees that progress is not fast enough for a minority of pupils in literacy in Key Stage 1 but finds that the school has appropriate behaviour management systems. Parents' comments indicate some weaknesses in communication for this group of parents.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Transition from home to school is well managed and standards of care and safety are good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This helps children feel secure and happy. Parents really appreciate this. Children like coming to school because there are plenty of interesting things to do. Children arrive with attainment that is broadly as expected, although there is a wide range. Staff establish good routines and children behave well. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and, as a result, children make satisfactory progress. The strong focus on developing children's language skills and the stepped-up arrangements for teaching phonics this year are leading to children's good progress in these areas. A good balance is struck between the more formal adult-led activities and those that children select for themselves. Role-play areas are stimulating and appeal to children's interests. They are well resourced both indoors and outside, for example the 'Vets' in the classroom and the outdoor 'Pet Shop'. These areas provide good scope for children to develop their creative, language and social skills. However, during adult-led shared writing sessions there is not always enough focus on ensuring children make an active contribution to the writing, for example by sounding out words or reading back the text together. Assessment is good. It is regular and computer based and used well to evaluate the impact of provision on children's progress. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory and improving.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the progress of lower attaining boys in literacy and their enjoyment of school and raise standards of more capable pupils in science.
- Ensure teaching always meets the learning needs of more capable and lower attaining pupils so their progress improves.
- Improve communication with parents, especially those of pupils in Key Stage 1, to ensure they are fully aware of the steps being taken to improve children's progress and the quality of education they are receiving.

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

Pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. When children enter Reception, their knowledge and skills are broadly as expected and, by the time pupils leave in Year 6, standards are average in English and mathematics. Pupils, including those from travelling communities, make satisfactory but uneven progress across the school. Test results in Year 2 improved this year for more capable boys and girls. However, reading standards are too low for boys because too many of them do not reach the expected standards.

Through improved assessment and target-setting, standards in writing for the current Year 6 indicate an improvement from the test results in 2008. However, the school has correctly identified that spelling and punctuation are still weaker aspects and is taking steps to improve them. Improvements in mathematics standards, as seen in 2008 Year 6 test results, are continuing for the current Year 6. Science standards remain below average. Too few pupils reach higher

levels because there are too few opportunities to learn at this standard, especially in investigative science.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. The great majority show respect and consideration for others, settle well to their lessons, listen attentively and concentrate well. Most pupils enjoy school. However, a small group of pupils, mainly boys in Years 1 and 2, do not enjoy school so much and are easily distracted. Attendance is satisfactory and the school works very closely with the education welfare officer to tackle any issues. Pupils feel safe at school and say that while bullying can occur, they feel confident in telling an adult who will deal with it effectively. Pupils cite examples of how to keep healthy by eating the right foods and they enjoy the wide range of sporting activities on offer. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory. The school is currently improving the links between assemblies and classroom learning so that pupils develop a deeper spiritual understanding and awareness of people's different racial backgrounds and religious beliefs. Pupils' good contribution to the community is shown in the way they conduct charity events and take care of their environment, including their eager participation in gardening clubs. Pupils' satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy prepares them soundly for their life ahead.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Monitoring of lessons is promoting more consistent and effective teaching but although improving, there is not enough consistently good teaching across the school. Staff's expectations of pupils' achievement have been raised and they have received support for helping them improve their teaching and for promoting good behaviour. The atmosphere in classrooms is pleasant and cooperative and pupils' relationships with each other and their teachers are often good with few interruptions to learning. The most effective lessons are characterised by challenging activities that move pupils' learning forward at a fast rate and meet the needs of all learners. Lessons often have practical starting points but they are sometimes uninspiring because pupils are expected to spend too long listening and watching rather than taking more responsibility for their learning and taking an active part. Although improving, assessment information is not always used to match work to the needs of more capable pupils nor, especially, to the needs of lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 1. Marking is satisfactory. Teaching assistants are usually effectively deployed for supporting pupils with learning difficulties.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is interesting and varied. Adults plan a wide range of worthwhile learning activities indoors and outside. In Years 1 to 6 steps have been taken to ensure planning is more systematic across the school and gaps have been addressed. However, arrangements for hearing pupils read vary in each class and the school acknowledges the need to step up the frequency and promote a more rigorous and consistent system. Cross-curricular work is developing well so that practical subjects are often used to underpin academic learning. Special focus curriculum weeks such as for art and design, music and science broaden the

teaching of these subjects and help teachers share their expertise. The programme for promoting pupils' personal, social and emotional development is comprehensive and has been recently built upon. Extra-curricular provision is good and pupils have good opportunities to take part in activities with other schools, for example in music and sport. The school also makes good use of school visits, including to local businesses such as a rocking horse factory, to extend pupils' experiences.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils have confidence in the staff and the school and they feel that any worries are dealt with. The recently appointed learning mentor is available for pupils to talk to and pupils feel safe and know who to go to if they have worries or concerns. Procedures for child protection, health and safety are thorough and meet requirements. The school works closely with a number of partners to support vulnerable pupils and there are effective partnerships with specialists for Traveller education to help pupils integrate and to raise their attendance. Systems for tracking pupils' progress, recently improved, are thorough. School leaders use these for evaluating pupils' progress and the impact of provision. Teachers have started to become more involved in analysing the impact of their provision on pupils' achievement. Pupils' individual target-setting is satisfactory, although literacy targets for lower attaining pupils are not always sufficiently related to the small reading steps needed to help them improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher and the relatively new senior team recognise what needs to be done to move the school forward. The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory. The improved process of setting targets, tracking and systems for measuring pupils' progress are enabling the school to monitor the quality of education more rigorously. Difficulties at senior level have been resolved and the senior team and middle leaders are being deployed so their skills can be used to best effect. Systems are being put in place to enable these leaders to take a stronger part in evaluating how well the school and different groups of pupils are performing. The recently appointed chair of governors has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and governors are being empowered to develop their role so they can hold the school to account. The calm nurturing of the headteacher is strengthening staff competence and expertise. A significant number of parents commented favourably, for example, saying 'The headteacher is doing a good job in leading both the staff and pupils forward.' Unfortunately, some parents do not yet recognise that these improvements are taking place. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. It is developing an action plan and steps are being taken to enable pupils to develop a good understanding of national and world communities. Although there are some positive links with the local community, liaison with parents is not as strong as it might be. The rate of recent improvement shows the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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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	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

### 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/or disabilities make progress	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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
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	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
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	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## 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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

11 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bethersden Primary School, Bethersden, Ashford TN26 3AH

You will remember we visited your school recently to find out how well the school is doing. We thoroughly enjoyed seeing you in lessons and at play, talking with a number of you and looking at some of your work. Thank you for making us welcome.

You need to know your school gives you a satisfactory education and your headteacher and school staff are working hard to make this better. Here are some good things about your school.

- Those of you in Reception settle well and make a happy start.
- You usually get on well with each other and most of you behave well.
- When you are given responsibilities, you carry them out willingly and properly.
- You have a good range of after-school clubs, visits and visitors.
- You are serious about the importance of eating healthily and you know you should not eat too many cakes and sweets.
- You learn to look after your world through your recycling and gardening activities.

Here are some things we are asking the school to do in order to improve.

- Help those who do not do so well in reading, especially in Years 1 and 2, to reach better standards and help more of you reach higher levels in science.
- Make sure the work you are given is never too hard or too easy.
- Let your parents know more about what the school is doing to improve your progress and how well you are getting on.

I hope you will keep trying hard in all you do so that your work continues to improve.

Yours faithfully

Eileen Chadwick

Lead inspector