

# Barnsole Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118419
<b>Local Authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	326825
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Sudworth

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>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	222
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	77
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	8
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jonathon Locke
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alison Pullen
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 March 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>	Sturdee Avenue Gillingham ME7 2JE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 852976
<b>Fax number</b>	01634 572889

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<b>Age group</b>	4–7
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 November 2008
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two inspectors.

## Description of the school

Children commence the Reception classes in this average-sized infant school in the September following their fourth birthday with gradual introduction to full-time education. The percentages of pupils entitled to free school meals and those who have difficulties in learning basic skills are above the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those whose first language is other than English is lower than in most schools. The school has just taken over the management of the pre-school group, but this was not inspected.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. It is a happy place of learning with a warm and welcoming environment. Everyone works together in a good team spirit under the very good leadership of the headteacher, who is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher. Pupils enjoy school and look forward to each day. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of all that it does for their children. As one parent writes, 'It is a caring and helpful school. My daughter skips to school every day. She enjoys every aspect of school life.' Others report that their children get upset when they cannot attend school, as they love it so much. Parents praise the good communication, the approachability of staff and the fair and equal manner in which staff treat children.

Staff take very good care of the pupils and provide a safe, clean and attractive environment in which the pupils can work. The pupils develop well as young people. Good teaching, together with improved and regular tracking of the pupils' progress, enables the pupils to achieve well by the end of Year 2. They are prepared effectively for the next stage of their education.

Pupils have a good appreciation of healthy and safe living for their age. They make friends readily and forge good relationships with the adults. Pupils gain a good appreciation of their local community through visits and visitors to the school. They raise money for different charities, which helps them to appreciate the needs of others locally and globally.

A good curriculum helps pupils to develop their skills well in different subjects. Improvements in writing attainment are a direct result of the purposeful opportunities staff provide for pupils to use their newly acquired knowledge of letter sounds. Staff do not always demand enough of the more able pupils in tasks given to them. Consequently, results at the higher level are not yet as good as those nationally. The school is now beginning to challenge these pupils more effectively. Pupils show a good competence in using computers for a range of purposes. Year 2 pupils utilised them well to make a slide presentation of their work on Guy Fawkes.

The children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The very good relationships and effective induction arrangements enable the youngest children to settle down to the routines quickly and to make positive relationships with one another and with the staff. The EYFS provision is good and continues to develop. The school recognises that the external environment for the EYFS children does not yet provide the same very good quality as the work in the classrooms. It rightly wants to make further improvements so that the whole of the children's experiences develop their learning to the full.

Staff are gaining rapidly in their confidence to evaluate different aspects of the provision and to help each other to develop professionally. They ensure that the governors are kept informed so that they have good evidence when they make strategic decisions. This is a school that has a good capacity to improve further, given the good strides that it has taken since the last inspection. The keenness and capability of the staff are clearly evident to enable them to make this an even richer place of learning.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children join the EYFS with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age. They make good progress. In 2008, the children attained more highly than for several years at the end of the Reception year and reached standards above those reported nationally. Current levels of attainment are similar to those at the same period last year, emphasising the good

improvements made to the EYFS. Refinements to teaching letter sounds have played a big factor in helping to improve children's reading and writing skills.

Good induction arrangements, including home visits and very good care arrangements, which also facilitate a safe environment, enable children to settle quickly in the well led EYFS provision. Relationships within the setting are very good. Staff meet and greet each child by name on arrival, which creates a happy start to the day. The activities are often planned well, but more could be done for able children. Staff are very alert to picking up on the children's interests and ideas. Black play dough became the witch's ice cream in the theme 'Moonlight and Magic' because of a child's idea. This flexibility allows for creativity and keeps learning fun.

Currently, the quality of the outside activities and resources does not yet match the very good quality of those inside. There is scope for making the outdoor provision a more effective extension to the classroom. Assessment systems are good and regular reviews of children's progress ensure that staff are alert to any particular individual needs. The children really enjoy school. Children eagerly dressed up as witches, made wands in the witches' corner and 'wrote' spells.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that a greater proportion of children reach the higher levels by the end of Year 2, by increasing the challenge further for able pupils in reading, writing, science and mathematics.
- Take steps to match the quality of the learning opportunities in the outside area of the EYFS to the very good quality of those indoors.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils build on their good progress in the EYFS in Years 1 and 2 and all groups of pupils achieve well by the end of Year 2. They reach broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics, making good progress from their starting points. Over time, progress in writing has accelerated significantly. In 2008, results in writing were almost equal to the national average. This is because the school has successfully introduced a system to improve the teaching of letter sounds and letter blends and matched this teaching precisely to pupils' individual needs and abilities. It is also because an increased emphasis on speaking and listening permits pupils to rehearse vocabulary and ideas before they begin to write. Standards in science are average. Currently, the proportion of pupils who reach the higher levels in English, mathematics and science is not as good as that nationally and the school recognises that there needs to be greater consistency in the level of challenge for them in the tasks they undertake. Pupils make good progress in developing their skills in information and communication technology (ICT).

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils behave well and enjoy school, as shown in their good levels of attendance. They have good attitudes to their work. They work well with one another. Older pupils help the younger ones at playtimes. Pupils make good progress in developing their awareness of how to live healthily and safely. Many walk to school. They eat fruit and try a range of vegetables. They talk about the correct procedures for crossing roads and holding an adult's hand while doing so. The school council organises procedures for keeping the school litter free. Periodic enterprise activities, such as making and selling items, enhance their economic awareness well. Pupils

develop a good understanding of right and wrong and a concern for others, and the very good assemblies contribute significantly to this. They look for good qualities in others and build up a 'wall of pride' with little cards indicating why particular people have been nominated. The pupils feel safe in school and look forward with enthusiasm to the joys of each new day.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils behave well and enjoy school, as shown in their good levels of attendance. They have good attitudes to their work. They work well with one another. Older pupils help the younger ones at playtimes. Pupils make good progress in developing their awareness of how to live healthily and safely. Many walk to school. They eat fruit and try a range of vegetables. They talk about the correct procedures for crossing roads and holding an adult's hand while doing so. The school council organises procedures for keeping the school litter free. Periodic enterprise activities, such as making and selling items, enhance their economic awareness well. Pupils develop a good understanding of right and wrong and a concern for others, and the very good assemblies contribute significantly to this. They look for good qualities in others and build up a 'wall of pride' with little cards indicating why particular people have been nominated. The pupils feel safe in school and look forward with enthusiasm to the joys of each new day.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

There is a good breadth to the curriculum, including effective use of ICT in different subjects. A good emphasis on teaching basic skills is reflected in improving results. The school makes good use of visits locally, enabling the pupils to learn from first-hand experiences. Visits to the park and Rochester Castle foster pupils' learning and enjoyment and make experiences memorable. The good range of extra-curricular activities, such as sport, choir and the gardening club, support the range of experiences well and widen pupils' interests. Much is done to ensure that the learning themes are appealing to pupils, such as 'Moonlight and Magic'. Staff foster imaginative play well, which also helps to develop pupils' social skills. Curriculum planning for science investigational work does not always ensure that pupils have a cohesive piece of work to look back on, to assist them in recording their conclusions.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Staff show very good care for the pupils and have warm relationships with them so that pupils feel able to share any worries or concerns they may have. Child protection arrangements are secure. Staff are alert to any vulnerable pupils. The school knows the pupils and their families very well, supported effectively by the home visit arrangements prior to entry. Good links with external agencies support individual pupils who have particular difficulties well .

Marking is often helpful to pupils' learning development. Staff often suggest to pupils how they might improve their work in the future. However, the pupils are not yet very skilled in assessing the quality of their own work. Pupils understand the targets that teachers set for them in English but those set in mathematics are sometimes too broad. Tracking systems are effective and staff check pupils' progress at regular intervals, enabling them to focus in quickly on individuals who are not doing as well as they should.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher leads the school very well. She has a very good working partnership with the deputy headteacher, who leads several aspects of the school's work very effectively, such as for the provision for pupils who find learning difficult. The staff work well as a team. Together, they are honest and accurate in their evaluation of the school's provision and are keen to develop the school further.

Subject leaders are developing well in their roles and they are gaining in confidence. Their analysis of provision is increasingly detailed. They deploy an effective range of strategies to evaluate quality, such as scrutinising work and talking to children in different classes about their learning. Monitoring of teaching has been regular. The headteacher's evaluations of lessons are very thorough, clearly identifying strengths and picking out areas for development very sensitively. It is clear that this has helped to improve the quality of teaching over time, which is reflected in improving standards.

The chair of the governing body leads it well. A small number of governors visit regularly and these visits help to keep them abreast of the school's work. Largely, however, the governing body relies on information provided by the school. However, it challenges and questions effectively, which helps to keep the staff on their toes. The school plays a key role in the local community and is developing pupils' understanding of the wider community.

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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

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2

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<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>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

## The quality of provision

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

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

22 November 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Barnsole Infant School, Gillingham, ME7 2JE

We enjoyed our visit to your school. We thank you for the chance to see you in your lessons and at play. You attend a good school. The staff look after you really well and make sure that you enjoy school. Mrs Pullen and her staff have really worked hard to improve your school. The staff get a lot of interesting things ready for you to do in your lessons. You enjoyed dressing up as witches and writing spells in the Reception classes. You all behave very well, look after one another, and play happily together. You are making good progress in your work and your writing skills have really improved a lot. We now want more of you to do even better still and reach an even higher level in writing, reading and mathematics at the end of Year 2. We have asked your teachers to help you to do so, especially those who find work easier than others.

You all enjoy school. Your parents are very happy that you attend such a good school. The youngest children in the Reception classes quickly settle down. We have asked the teachers in the Reception classes to make the learning out of doors even better than it is and they will try to do this for you when they plan the work.

Thank you once again for all the help that you gave to us. We really enjoyed the two days that we spent with you. We wish you all very well in the days to come.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sudworth

Lead inspector