

The Brent Primary School

London Road, Dartford Kent, DA2 6BA

Inspection dates

17–18 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching in some lessons does not enable pupils to make good progress. The planned work does not always match the needs of pupils, especially those who respond well to challenging tasks.
- When spelling, pupils do not use their knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics) correctly and this affects the development of their writing skills.
- Teachers do not always plan well enough to ensure that lessons build carefully on previous learning. As a result, the needs of individual pupils are not regularly met.
- Attainment of pupils in Year 6 in English and mathematics is now broadly average overall. Attainment in writing is below average. More able pupils do not always reach higher levels, especially in writing.
- In some lessons, the slow pace of learning restricts the amount of progress pupils make.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders are relentlessly focused on improving pupils' progress and there is now a trend of rising achievement.
- Attainment in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 is significantly above average, reflecting the recent improvements in the school.
- The school governors challenge school leaders about all aspects of pupils' progress and are aware of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching.
- All staff manage behaviour well throughout the school and, as a result, pupils' behaviour is good. They feel safe.
- The school has good relationships with parents and carers and this has helped to improve attendance rates to above average.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that many are well prepared for the start of Year 1.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors had meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other senior staff, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors met some parents informally at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in twenty four part lessons, some of which were jointly observed by the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits to lessons.
- Inspectors took account of 26 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and other questionnaires provided by the school.
- Inspectors considered a range of information, including the school's improvement plan, data on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring files, monitoring reports, safeguarding records and local authority reports.

Inspection team

Neil McDonough, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kath Beck	Additional Inspector
Nicholas Wollaston	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-size primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding given to the school to support the progress of pupils eligible for free school meals, those pupils who are looked after and those pupils from service families) is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action and school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Almost three quarters of the pupils are White British.
- The school meets the current floor standards which sets the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching so that all pupils make at least good progress by ensuring:
 - activities are suitably challenging for all ability groups, especially the more able pupils
 - teachers review their lesson plans effectively and adapt learning activities to match individual needs, building well on previous learning
 - teachers take into account that some pupils work more quickly than others and adapting the pace of learning as necessary
 - comments in marking help pupils to fully understand how they can improve the quality of their work.
- Make sure that teachers raise achievement in writing across the school by:
 - helping more pupils to learn the sounds letters make and use this knowledge to spell words correctly
 - assisting pupils, especially those in the higher ability groups, to learn how to write well-constructed sentences and use punctuation
 - ensuring pupils improve the presentation of their work by forming letters correctly and regularly joining their letters when writing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The decline in pupils' achievement at the age of 11 over the past two years has been halted. Pupils moving on to secondary school from Year 6 in 2012 reached levels of attainment in English and mathematics overall that broadly match the national average. This is a much better position than in the previous two years, when attainment declined to a low point.
- In the last three years, pupils' achievement at Key Stage 1 has improved. Attainment in writing and in mathematics is average and it is above average in reading. Over the past year, pupils' progress in writing has improved but there are still aspects of writing development that are hindering further progress. Pupils use their knowledge of sounds and letters to read well but this is not used successfully to improve spelling.
- The quality of pupils' handwriting and writing skills varies across the school. Not all pupils use joined script and good spelling and punctuation are not evident in their work. The attainment of more able pupils in writing is not as good as it should be.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress. Early reading, writing and mathematical skills are taught in captivating ways. Play activities help children to 'have a go' and try out what they have learned independently. Consequently children start in Year 1 with knowledge and skills that are above those normally expected of them at age five.
- Pupils are currently making at least expected progress in all year groups across the school and some pupils in Years 1, 3, 4 and 6 are making even better progress as a result of good teaching. Because the quality of teaching is uneven, not enough pupils are doing as well as they should in writing.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has accelerated in Year 6, following changes to the way they are taught and the deployment of well-trained additional staff to help them overcome their learning difficulties. Similarly, gaps in progress are closing rapidly for pupils supported by the pupil premium when their achievement is compared with that of other groups of pupils.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Most teachers have high expectations of pupils and have a determination for them to be successful. While many aspects of teaching are good, these strong features are not always present in all classrooms. Typically, in lessons that require improvement, tasks are not well matched to pupils' earlier learning. The pace of learning is sometimes slow and more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to improve their writing. Some marking in books is helpful to pupils in showing them how well they have done and what they need to do to improve, but teachers do not always check that pupils have understood their comments.
- Teaching in some Year 6 lessons helps pupils to focus on the key skills needed to be successful by the time they move to secondary school. In one lesson, pupils made exceptional progress in using a range of methods to convert imperial to metric units. In another class, however, where pupils were learning the properties of shapes, the work did not deepen pupils' previous understanding or extend earlier learning, and too little progress was made.
- Teaching is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage, as shown by the steady rise in children's achievements at age five over the past three years. Well-qualified staff use their knowledge well to help children learn through engaging activities. The staff join in the play activities alongside the children, and in doing so help them to develop their vocabulary and share their ideas confidently.
- Where there is good teaching, it typically uses resources well to capture pupils' interests and to provide lively and interesting activities which motivate pupils to work hard and develop their powers of reasoning and a willingness to question facts and figures. In a Year 1 mathematics class, for example, pupils were encouraged to estimate a length before measuring it. Year 4 pupils also wrote

well on topics inspired by the novel *Carrie's War*.

- The school uses the additional pupil premium funding to increase the number of staff who help pupils to overcome some of the difficulties they experience with their learning. One-to-one sessions have had a positive impact on helping them to gain the skills they need to read confidently.
- Teaching assistants are well trained, especially in supporting disabled pupils and those with special educational needs so that they too make the expected progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe and understand how to keep themselves safe. Pupils enjoy their break and lunchtimes and get on well with each other. They are well supervised at these times. Pupils are very tolerant of less than good teaching. However, very occasionally, pupils lack concentration because of the limitations in teaching.
- The school has clear expectations of behaviour and pupils understand how they should conduct themselves. A friendly caring atmosphere means everyone feels valued. The school poem, which focuses on building good relationships and caring for each other, is understood by all pupils.
- Pupils show respect for each other, for members of staff and visitors. They are polite and well mannered and take pride in their responsibilities. Pupils state that staff at the school are helpful and have high expectations for behaviour. One pupil commented, 'Each year the teachers encourage me to be a better person.'
- Attendance has improved and is now above the national figures for primary schools. Good links with parents mean that pupils attend school regularly and exclusions are rare.
- Pupils know that there are different types of bullying and know how to deal with these. Incidents of bullying are also rare. If it does occur, pupils are confident that the staff at the school will take the necessary action to deal with it.
- Parents who completed the on-line questionnaire agree that the school keeps children safe and helps them to behave and that there are good arrangements at the school to deal with any incidents of unacceptable behaviour. Parents value the arrangements for them to drop off their children in the mornings in a safe environment away from the busy road.

The leadership and management

are good

- The headteacher, governors, senior managers and subject leaders share a clear and resolute vision for the school to improve. Governor training, as well as skilled middle leaders, is driving improvement from the Early Years Foundation Stage. This has led to sustained success in the Reception Year and rapid improvement in pupils' achievements at Key Stage 1, particularly in writing over the past year. This improvement in the pupils' rate of progress has not yet reached Years 5 and 6, where there is still much ground to be made up, particularly in ensuring more able pupils reach the levels of which they are capable in writing. Nor have leaders, despite all their efforts, yet secured consistently good teaching and progress across the school.
- The school leader responsible for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has brought about changes to teaching arrangements that have resulted in improved progress and which fosters equal opportunities across the curriculum.
- Subject leaders play an important role in raising achievement. They are held accountable for the progress and needs of all pupils. The careful analysis of pupils' performance has resulted in changes to the curriculum. For example, increasing the time allocated to mental mathematics has enhanced pupils' skills in quick calculation. Subject leaders have led training for other staff, which has resulted in improving classroom skills for teaching assistants, although there is still too much variability in the way teachers organise their deployment.

- Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The impact of training and visits by staff to other schools is seen in the increased number of children who achieve well at age five.
- Senior and subject leaders have carried out an evaluation of the school's performance and this has led to the development of an action plan which is focused sharply on raising levels of pupils' progress.
- The school leadership team is determined to secure good teaching. Its currently effective performance management strategies make sure all teachers understand their responsibilities for pupils' progress. As part of staff performance management, the headteacher has established a rigorous reward system which ensures that any financial enhancements are directly related to pupil performance. Staff have to justify the impact they have had on pupil progress before any pay increase is considered by the governors.
- The local authority has a light touch approach to the school. It provides a regular check that identifies the school's strengths and further areas for improvement. Information from these checks is used by the school to understand its own effectiveness.
- The school's curriculum is increasingly effective in ensuring pupils make expected progress but it does not fully meet the needs of higher attaining pupils and there are still some weaknesses in the programme to support writing skills. The school positively promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education through its links with families and through good opportunities where pupils can develop their individual talents.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- has carried out a thorough review of members' roles and responsibilities and has written a 'governors' handbook' which provides clear guidelines on how to check pupils' achievement
- is aware of the range of data relating to pupils' progress and asks senior staff searching questions about the school's results and the progress of different groups of pupils
- regularly checks which pupils are in need of additional support through regular visits
- ensures that performance management procedures are linked to salary progression for both teachers and teaching assistants and has determined action to address previous underperformance in teaching
- has ensured that resources have been allocated to recruit additional staff to enable pupils to catch up with their learning and to support pupils who are eligible to receive the pupil premium
- has effective procedures for evaluating school policies and makes sure all staff are carefully vetted and all statutory safeguarding responsibilities met
- provides a careful induction programme for new governors.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors. A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.

School details

Unique reference number	118589
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	401767

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Harper
Headteacher	Sue Nicholson
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2009
Telephone number	01322 223943
Fax number	01322 224201
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