

INSPECTION REPORT

**BALCOMBE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Balcombe

LEA area: West Sussex

Unique reference number: 126006

Headteacher: Mr T Harris

Reporting inspector: Eileen Chadwick
19115

Dates of inspection: 17th and 18th July 2001

Inspection number: 195563

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	London Road Balcombe West Sussex
Postcode:	RH17 6HS
Telephone number:	01444 811403
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body, Balcombe CEP School
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs A Reese
Date of previous inspection:	28/04/97

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a thriving village school, which is smaller than most primary schools. It mainly serves the picturesque village of Balcombe whilst attracting some pupils from the surrounding rural area. There are 145 pupils aged between four and 11, including the 16 in the Foundation Stage who are in a Reception class. There are five classes. All the pupils are taught in classes containing two age groups. There are only slightly more boys than girls although there are large gender differences in some classes. For instance, there are three times as many boys as girls in the Year 2 and 3 class and twice as many girls as boys in the Year 5 and 6 class. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds. All pupils speak English as their first language and none are from ethnic minorities. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals, at two per cent, is well below average. Twenty-nine per cent have special educational needs, which is above average. Three pupils have statements of educational need, which is broadly average. Most of the pupils on the special educational needs register are boys with difficulties in English. Only small numbers of pupils enter or leave the school at times other than the usual time of entry or leaving. Pupils' attainment on entry is above average overall although the children have a wide spread of attainment which ranges from well above to well below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with many strengths. Very good leadership, curricular planning and high quality teaching have raised standards still further since the previous inspection. A major factor in the school's success is the way it provides a broad and rich curriculum for its pupils. Eleven-year olds often attain high standards in English, mathematics and science in national tests and pupils' talents are also nurtured very well in the rest of the National Curriculum subjects. Pupils are provided with very good opportunities to develop their intellectual and physical skills as well as their creativity. The school prepares pupils very well for their secondary education. It provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- By the age of eleven, standards are very high in reading and science and well above average in mathematics. Investigative science is a strength of the school.
- By the age of seven, standards are well above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Standards in Year 2 have improved this year due to high expectations, high quality teaching and excellent assessment systems for monitoring and improving pupils' progress.
- The very strong leadership of the headteacher, the close teamwork of all staff and effective partnership with the governing body ensure that the school has a vision and the systems for constant improvement.
- The school provides a high quality curriculum that is exciting and inspires pupils to do their best. This enables teachers to develop pupils' knowledge and skills in depth across the entire National Curriculum. Teachers effectively develop pupils' problem solving skills, creativity and their physical skills as well their knowledge.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good and encourages pupils to have excellent attitudes and behaviour and to make the best use of their time in school.

What could be improved

- The match of work for children in the Foundation Stage in literacy and numeracy sessions so that children of higher and lower attainment consistently achieve the best standards of which they are capable.
- The consistency of opportunities for older more capable pupils to achieve well in writing.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since its last successful inspection in May 1997. Pupils' listening skills are much improved because teachers provide very interesting work and this encourages pupils to attend carefully. Teachers' expectations for the amount and quality of written

work have improved very well in Key Stage 1 and in most classes in Key Stage 2, although expectations are not consistently high enough for older juniors. There have been marked improvements in the way that teachers plan for ensuring pupils of a similar age range are given comparable learning opportunities. Assessment is now analysed more closely so that it informs planning and is usually used well to set targets. Compared with the previous inspection, eleven-year olds reach higher standards in reading, mathematics and science. Seven-year olds also reached far higher standards in this year's national tests in reading, writing and mathematics according to the provisional results of these tests. However, standards reached by eleven-year olds in writing are above average and similar to the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved significantly as there is now a higher proportion of good and very good teaching. A striking feature is the very good quality of teaching found across the curriculum, for example, in art, design and technology, history, geography and physical education. The school has a very good capacity to continue to improve in the future.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	A	C	A	A
Mathematics	A	A	C	D
Science	A	A	A*	A*

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
well below average	E

During the last three years, overall standards have been well above national averages compared with all schools as they were with similar schools in 2000. Improvement is broadly in line with the national trend. In 2000, standards in science were very high, and in the top five per cent when compared with national averages and similar schools. However, mathematics results were below those for similar schools because fewer pupils attained Level 5 than pupils in similar schools. These standards, overall, reflected good improvements compared with the standards reached by the same pupils when they were in Year 2. The school set satisfactory targets for English and mathematics for 2000 and 2001 and almost achieved its targets in both periods.

Provisional indications of the standards reached in 2001 national tests for the current Year 6 show improvement in mathematics in the proportion attaining Level 5. This is the result of strong monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and pupils' progress towards their targets. Standards in science remain very high because nearly all pupils attain Level 4 and a very high proportion attain Level 5. However, standards in English are not as high as in 2000. This is due to the higher proportion of pupils with high level special educational needs in this year group, including a minority who entered late in Year 6 and who did not attain the national expectation of Level 4. Additionally, although results in reading at Level 5 remain high, results at Level 5 in writing are lower than in reading, mathematics and science. However, a comparatively small cohort of pupils took the tests and the results of one pupil can significantly alter percentages. The inspection's findings are in line with the provisional 2001 test results and show that eleven-year olds attain very high standards in reading and science and well above average standards in speaking, listening and mathematics. Standards in writing are above average.

The findings of the inspection confirm the high standards reached by seven year olds in the provisional results for the 2001 tests in reading, writing and mathematics. Children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress overall and reach above average standards in their areas of learning. However, in Reception, the progress of children of both higher and lower attainment is not always steady in literacy and numeracy. Pupils, throughout the school, reach high standards in

information and communication technology and apply their computer skills very well to other subjects.

By the age of eleven, pupils' overall achievement is very good. Their achievement is very good in reading, science and in the broader curriculum. Progress is good in mathematics and satisfactory overall in writing. However, higher attainers in Year 6, do not always have opportunities to reach the best levels of which they are capable in writing. The progress of very able pupils in writing is inconsistent. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	These are excellent. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and the challenge of new learning. They persist and practise in order to perfect their skills.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is very good and contributes greatly to the school's standards, happy atmosphere and ethos.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Relationships are excellent and pupils make a strong contribution to the school community, showing respect for the values and beliefs of others. Pupils work very well together in small teams, make joint decisions and are very adept at solving problems.
Attendance	Well above average. Most pupils arrive on time.

All these factors assist the progress pupils make.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Fifty five per cent of the teaching observed during the inspection was very good or excellent, thirty-one per cent was good and nine per cent was satisfactory. Only four per cent was unsatisfactory. Very good or excellent teaching was observed in all classes in Key Stages 1 and 2. High quality teaching and learning in mathematics, including numeracy, with very good teaching in Year 6, are raising standards. Literacy is often taught well in both Key Stages 1 and 2 and this promotes good learning. Excellent teaching was observed in music (Years 1 and 2), design and technology (Years 4 and 5) and physical education (Years 5 and 6). In excellent lessons, subjects are taught thoroughly because of the depth of teachers' own subject knowledge. Teachers also provide an excellent balance for the pupils to learn through listening to instructions and gaining knowledge, practising skills, expressing ideas and developing their creativity. In Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers competently teach thinking skills and have high expectations of their pupils. In the Foundation Stage, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Literacy lessons are generally matched to the needs of the majority, but the introductory class reading session is sometimes too hard for younger or lower attaining children. This means that they do not spend enough time reading at their own level. Numeracy sessions match the needs of average attainers but expectations for lower and higher attainers during group work are not always high enough.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Broad, well balanced and relevant. Subject teaching is thorough and time is used excellently when pupils work on real problems across subject barriers. Good planning for literacy and

	numeracy in Key Stages 1 and 2.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. Very good in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. The rigorous additional targeted teaching of literacy and numeracy in Year 2 is raising standards.

Provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Excellent opportunities for pupils' social development and very good provision for spiritual and moral development. Good provision for cultural development, although multi-cultural aspects are less developed.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. Good assessment procedures with particularly thorough assessment in Key Stage 1 for planning literacy and numeracy work. High quality care and emotional support are provided. Assessment procedures for the very able and children in Reception are not strong enough.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership by the headteacher, who is strongly supported by the very capable deputy headteacher. Co-ordinators' roles are well developed. All work as a team and share a vision for leading the school to excellence.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are very effective and strongly committed to school improvement. They work closely with the school and play a key role in helping to steer the direction the school takes.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very thorough analysis of national tests and strong monitoring of teaching. These have brought about higher results in this year's end of Year 2 tests and mathematics in Key Stage 2.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Teachers' subject expertise is used very well in the co-ordination of subjects, which helps them to provide strong subject leadership. Computers are very well used. The development plan is clear about its targets and how much they will cost. Financial management is very good. The school has good procedures for judging how well money is spent.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The exciting learning opportunities provided. • The very strong sense of community in a family atmosphere. • The way their children are eager to come to school. • The very high standards of behaviour. • The very good quality of the teaching and the way their children are cared for. • The progress their children make in Year 2. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra curricular activities. • Homework does not progress consistently as children get older and is sometimes irregular. • A small minority expressed concern about the impact of mixed aged classes on Reception children and that they did not always achieve as well as they might.

The inspection team agrees with all parents' positive comments. Additionally, when outside visits are included, the team finds extra curricular provision is good overall. Homework is inconsistent sometimes for older pupils and is not always rigorous enough. Several parents said that pupils "catch up" in literacy and numeracy in Year 2. The inspection team agrees that progress is particularly good in Year 2. Whilst managing the wide range of age and attainment in the mixed age classes is often very skilful, this is not as successful in the Foundation Stage and Year 1 class.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

By the age of eleven, standards are very high in reading and science and well above average in mathematics. Investigative science is a strength of the school.

1. Pupils enter the school with above average attainment and, by the time they leave at eleven years of age their achievement is very good in reading and science and good in mathematics. The latest tests for 2001 show that three-quarters of all pupils attained Level 5 in reading, which is very high indeed. Science results are equally impressive as two thirds achieved level 5 whilst nearly all achieved Level 4 or above. Standards in mathematics have improved for higher attainers this year as 35 per cent achieved Level 5 compared with only 20 per cent doing so last year. Comparisons of the standards achieved by eleven year olds in mathematics with their results in their end of Year 2 tests shows that pupils have achieved very well in Key Stage 2. The proportion attaining Level 4 or above in reading and mathematics was average. This represented good achievement this year as several had high level special educational needs and entered late. Pupils make good, and sometimes very good, progress in reading, science and mathematics because of high quality teaching in Key Stage 2.

2. Throughout Key Stage 2, teachers provide very good opportunities for pupils to read a wide range of literature, including children's novels. Some very good work was seen in Years 4 and 5 when pupils were taught advanced reading and thinking skills through traditional literature, including the Pied Piper of Hamelin and myths and legends from different cultures. Research skills develop very well and eleven year olds read deeply for information when researching the Internet, CDROM or factual books. Pupils are very skilled when synthesising information in English, history and geography in order to form opinions. In a good literacy lesson observed in Year 6, pupils demonstrated these skills when they wrote accounts of the Second World War from different perspectives such as that of a child growing up in war torn Germany or a child growing up in Balcombe. Pupils wrote imaginatively and with accuracy, often referring to literature or factual accounts to support their views. Earlier in the term, the teacher had sensitively introduced a wide range of literature including "The Diary of Anne Frank" and had ensured that pupils had read deeply for meaning and developed their thinking skills of inference and deduction.

3. In mathematics, all the teaching observed in Key Stage 2 was at least good and was very good in Year 6. In a very good mathematics lesson in Year 6, pupils developed their problem-solving skills very well as a result of the teacher's very competent teaching. In this lesson, pupils were asked to devise a formula to enable them to "grow number squares". The teacher's clear instruction and questioning enabled pupils to try different ways of solving the problem and to apply previously learned basic number skills. In this lesson, algebra was used skilfully by the pupils as a natural problem-solving tool.

4. The excellent standards attained in science also result from the very meticulous development of pupils' investigative skills and the way pupils are provided with relevant practical work for applying and learning new knowledge. This was demonstrated in a very good lesson in Years 5 and 6 when pupils were asked to apply their knowledge of forces and materials to solve a problem. Pupils were required to design and make a model bomb shelter which would withstand the impact of a kilogram weight dropped from a certain height. Pupils' application of their knowledge of forces was excellent and there were many original designs for the structures, including domes and triangular pyramids. A striking

feature of all scientific investigative work is that the different forms of scientific enquiry skills are taught rigorously. Pupils are taught to evaluate and improve their work and to use mathematics and information and communication technology as a natural tool for learning.

By the age of seven, standards are well above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Standards in Year 2 have improved this year due to high expectations, high quality teaching and excellent assessment systems for monitoring and improving pupils' progress.

5. Provisional results indicate that the standards reached by Year 2 pupils in the 2001 tests have improved substantially this year compared with those reached by pupils from 1997 to 2000. This has been brought about by changes of teaching personnel, thorough monitoring of teaching and learning, thorough assessment and target setting. There has been a significant rise in the proportion of pupils reaching the sound Level 2B or Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' results at Level 3 in science are also higher.

6. The quality of lessons observed for Year 2 pupils during the inspection in reading, writing and mathematics was always good and very good in science. The consistency of strong teaching for all Year 2 pupils is ensuring that these pupils make the necessary progress. Examination of Year 2 pupils' previous work showed that a significant proportion made very good progress from September 2000 to July 2001 in writing in both mixed age classes. Standards for these pupils at the end of Year 1 were barely average which indicated some earlier underachievement.

7. In the literacy and numeracy sessions for the mixed age classes for Years 1 and 2 and Years 2 and 3 pupils, teachers successfully manage the wide range of pupils' attainment during class and group work. They ensure that all pupils learn well by carefully assessing pupils' attainment, closely matching work to pupils' different abilities and skilfully organising and managing pupils. These factors, combined with teachers' high expectations of what pupils can achieve, result in very purposeful and productive learning.

8. In the very good science lessons observed for Years 1 and 2 and Years 2 and 3, teachers demonstrated very thorough teaching of a range of investigative skills and strong subject knowledge. In both classes, the high quality planning and sequencing of lessons over a period of time ensured that pupils acquired skills and knowledge very well. In Years 1 and 2, pupils were able to design nature trails in their school grounds after gaining very good understanding of mini beasts' habitats during previous lessons. The lesson observed linked naturally to map work in geography, demonstrating the clever way in which the teacher made learning relevant to pupils and used time effectively by linking subjects. In Years 2 and 3, the teacher taught experimental procedure rigorously over a number of lessons. This ensured that pupils could design and make their own experiments for testing the best conditions for optimum plant growth. A very good feature of the lesson observed was how the teacher taught thinking skills by providing excellent opportunities for pupils to search for patterns in their results. Throughout, science is made relevant to pupils' daily lives and pupils are given plenty of opportunities to acquire knowledge through their own practical enquiry.

The very strong leadership of the headteacher, the close teamwork of all staff and effective partnership with the governing body ensure that the school has a vision and systems for constant improvement

9. The school's main aim is to provide the pupils with a broad and rich curriculum so that they are able to develop different facets of their abilities including the spiritual, academic, creative, social and physical. This is very well met. This stems from the headteacher's vision and quest for developing a broad yet rigorous curriculum in a relaxed and friendly

atmosphere. Pupils thrive in this happy but challenging environment. Parents appreciate the way pupils develop and leave the school as confident and well-rounded eleven-year olds. The headteacher's strong relationships with the community and parents' full involvement with the school are also much appreciated. The very close links between the school and parents foster the very good progress that pupils make. The majority of parents, who are a questioning group, say they that are very pleased that such a high quality education is available in Balcombe.

10. The headteacher works closely with his very capable deputy who shares his vision for teaching and learning. The school improvement planning process is shared with all staff and governors, and, once agreed, the purposes for improvement form the basis for determined future action. The school carefully analyses its assessment data and, on the basis of this information, evaluates its teaching methods. Both the headteacher, deputy and subject co-ordinators monitor teaching and, as a result of this, individual targets are set.

11. The improved national test results for Year 2 are the result of the effective action taken by the headteacher and the strong drive by staff to improve standards. Since the previous inspection, there has been thoughtful reflection on how to address effectively the key issues and improve the education offered. The school is outward looking and embraces considered change. The governors are very closely involved with the school and work very effectively with the headteacher in determining the direction the school takes. Governors are well trained, monitor the work of the school carefully and provide very valuable support. Funds are managed prudently and very efficiently. Within this very favourable picture, the school development plan does not always show rigorous numerical targets. This school is at the heart of the community it serves.

The school provides a high quality curriculum that is exciting and inspires pupils to do their best. This enables teachers to develop pupils' knowledge and skills in depth across the full range of the National Curriculum. Teachers effectively develop pupils' problem solving skills, creativity and their physical skills as well their knowledge.

12. Curricular planning is very good and a striking feature is the way teachers often make pupils' learning relevant by providing real problems which involve different subjects. In a very good history and art lesson in Years 2 and 3, pupils were asked to observe and interpret meaning in an Egyptian picture. This required high levels of inference and deduction and good skills and knowledge in both art and history. Previous lessons had built these skills well so that pupils could apply their knowledge when problem solving. The pupils achieved their purposes because the teacher had already ensured that pupils had carefully learned art techniques in the style of Egyptian artists and understood key facts about Egyptian history.

13. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They teach subject knowledge and skills thoroughly in ways in which pupils can understand. They provide very good opportunities for pupils to develop their creativity. In an outstanding music lesson for Years 1 and 2, there was excellent teaching of the interrelated skills of listening and appraising and composing and performing which led to excellent learning. The pupils were given the task of composing pieces of music in small groups so that they could interpret different parts of an artist's stormy weather painting. The pupils clearly understood how pieces of music can tell stories and very successfully created their own musical stories. The teacher's excellent teaching, not only in this lesson, but in previous lessons was demonstrated in the way that pupils finally performed in unison as an orchestra. The pupils produced very effective layers of sound and reached very high standards. The way in

which the teacher used the picture to help the pupils understand the purpose of musical scores, and how they are read, was outstanding.

14. Teachers' make very effective use of time by combining subjects and using one subject to enhance another. This is made possible because teachers have very good subject knowledge. This enables them to teach subjects rigorously and to make relevant links between subjects. In an excellent art and design and technology lesson, pupils designed and made their own musical instruments. The teacher capably used instruction for teaching skills and also provided pupils with excellent opportunities for designing and making. The level of pupils' creativity was very high and was shown, for example, in the way they used materials ingeniously for solving practical problems. Pupils produced high quality end products because of the painstaking and steady development of their artistic and practical skills from a young age. By Years 4 and 5, pupils have learned to use the designing, making and testing process independently and are very clear about what they are trying to achieve.

15. The depth and breadth of teachers' subject knowledge and skills led to very high quality teaching in physical education in Key Stage 2. In an excellent cricket lesson in Year 6, pupils were given very clear criteria for evaluating their own work. The teacher's excellent range of teaching styles enabled pupils to learn through copying and practising skills as well as evaluating and improving their own performance. The teacher's own strong subject skills enabled him to provide excellent demonstrations of bowling and catching. The teacher's enthusiasm was transmitted to pupils and their performance improved rapidly because they greatly enjoyed the lesson. In a very good Year 4 and 5 rounders lesson, very good skill coaching and strong class management led to very good improvement in fielding, catching and the ability to work successfully as a team.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good and encourages pupils to have excellent attitudes and behaviour and to make the best use of their time in school.

16. This provision has improved since the school's last inspection when it was judged to be good. Daily assemblies are the focal point of pupils' spiritual development. Prayer is a regular feature and, whilst there is a strong Christian approach, there are appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness and understanding of other faiths and cultures. There is very good provision for pupils to develop spiritual awareness through the curriculum. Music, art and literature are used to inspire pupils and to heighten pupils' awareness of how to express feelings and thoughts visually, in words and music. Pupils are provided with excellent opportunities for developing a sense of wonder through nature as well as the created world of science and technology. Pupils' moral development is promoted by the very good examples set by adults and the great care that is taken to develop very good relationships. Pupils are given a very clear moral code through the Christian ethos of the school. Teachers consistently reinforce this and apply the behaviour policy very well in their classes.

17. From the youngest age, pupils are provided with systematic opportunities for developing their social skills, including collaborative work in many subjects. By the age of eleven, pupils' ability to work in small teams and make joint decisions is excellent. Outside visits to places of historical or scientific interest, churches, musical and dramatic productions enrich pupils' cultural experiences. The very good provision results in confident pupils who have high self-esteem and are very keen to learn. Pupils are courteous to each other and adults and their behaviour is very good at all times. When lessons are particularly stimulating, pupils' behaviour and enthusiasm for learning are excellent.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The match of work for children in the Foundation Stage in literacy and numeracy sessions so that children of higher and lower attainment consistently achieve the best standards of which they are capable.

18. The teaching of literacy and numeracy, whilst satisfactory overall for Reception children, has some weaknesses. The three part literacy and numeracy sessions are in place although their implementation lacks rigour. The time spent on whole class work is too short considering these pupils are now at the end of the Reception year. Pupils sometimes underachieve in different parts of the lesson. In a numeracy lesson, which was satisfactory overall, there was a lack of challenge for higher attainers during the introductory session. The task of ordering numbers to 20 did not provide enough challenge for some able pupils, who needed more opportunities for thinking. In a group numeracy session, lower attainers were not challenged sufficiently when they painted symmetrical patterns. During their group work, the support assistant did too much talking about the practical aspects of the painting. This resulted in missed opportunities for developing language for numeracy, such as the mathematical language associated with counting and adding or taking away the spots on their symmetrical butterflies.

19. The school supplements literacy teaching with group reading and writing. Discussions with children, hearing them read and examining their work shows that, overall, most make satisfactory progress in learning to read and write. The majority can read simple texts and write simple word patterns and sentences. However, lower attainers, who are sometimes younger pupils, are not making enough progress in literacy sessions. Time during literacy sessions is not always well used and nor is work well matched to children's attainment. One lesson in literacy was unsatisfactory when the time spent on whole class shared reading was too brief. The shared class text was the task of writing a letter together. Although the teacher's modelling of how to write was satisfactory, not enough time was spent on reading. The progress of average and lower attaining pupils was unsatisfactory in this session as the lack of pictures and repetitive word patterns prevented average and lower attaining pupils learning the basic reading skills. During group work, the older or more able children working with the teacher made satisfactory progress whereas children working with classroom assistants were not sufficiently challenged. There were insufficient opportunities for developing language for thinking as well as the basic skills of reading and writing. The use of Stepping Stones (the assessment procedures for the new Foundation Curriculum) for measuring children's attainment and progress and planning work is not sufficiently accurate enough in literacy.

The consistency of opportunities for older more capable pupils to achieve well in writing.

20. The school has a substantial proportion of more capable pupils. This includes a significant proportion of higher attaining pupils and a significant minority who are very able. The school often provides well for its higher attaining pupils (those who are working at approximately one level above national expectations) and this is seen in the high standards attained in national tests by seven and eleven. However, examination of pupils' 2001 end of Year 6 test results shows that twice as many pupils attained the high level, Level 5, in reading and science as in mathematics. The differences between writing and reading and science were even more pronounced. The results at Level 5 vary too much from subject to subject. Results for 2001 are not just an isolated instance. In 2000, results in mathematics at Level 5 were below the national average although the proportion attaining Level 5 was well above average in English and very high in science. Examination of pupils' previous work shows that in the current Year 6 pupils are provided with consistently good opportunities for higher level work in mathematics. However, despite some very good opportunities for writing, there are inconsistencies in Year 6. Opportunities for pupils to write extended pieces of work in English, and the quality of the presentation of written work, vary considerably from lesson to lesson.

21. The school has identified the need to provide for more able pupils more systematically. Several took Level 6 this year although none achieved this grade. The school does not provide such extension work until pupils are in the oldest class. The lack of systematic earlier provision prevents pupils achieving their best in English, mathematics and science by the age of eleven. The wider curriculum sometimes provides opportunities for the very able to excel. This occurs in some aspects of information and communication technology, design and technology and sport, because some teachers have very good knowledge of the subject. However, there is still some variability in some subjects and the school does not keep rigorous track of very able pupils' progress for ensuring that provision is more consistent.

22. WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

(1) Improve the implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies in the Reception class by: (paragraphs 18-19)

- providing training to ensure that staff have a thorough understanding of how to implement the strategies in the context of the Foundation curriculum;
- ensuring that time is used more effectively during literacy and numeracy class sessions and that teaching staff's expectations of what children can achieve in reading, writing and numeracy are high enough;
- finding ways to improve the management of the wide range of attainment in Reception in the mixed age class so that all children can achieve their best, including the lower and higher attaining children;
- assessing children's attainment more effectively through using the Stepping Stones and, where appropriate, the National Curriculum level descriptions, and using the results of this to plan work.

(2) Improving the consistency of provision for more able pupils by: (paragraphs 20-21)

- providing consistent opportunities for higher attainers to achieve their best levels, especially in writing and mathematics;
- putting more rigorous identification procedures for very able pupils in place and providing for them especially in English, mathematics, and science;
- reflecting carefully on the best way to provide for the very able pupils and linking with other agencies where appropriate;
- ensuring that teachers are trained to teach subjects at a rigorous enough level where necessary;
- monitoring the progress of the more capable pupils carefully and the school's strategies for teaching them.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	22
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	10

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
14	41	32	9	4		

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y R – Y 6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	145
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	3
<i>FTE means full-time equivalent.</i>	
Special educational needs	YR-Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	42
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.9
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	16	3

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	•		
	Girls	•		
	Total	16	15	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84(84)	79 (79)	89 (95)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	16	15	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84(84)	79(95)	100(100)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

- omitted as there are fewer than 10 girls

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	10	10

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	10	10
	Girls	10	6	10
	Total	20	16	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	100 (80)	80(95)	100(100)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	10	10
	Girls	8	6	9
	Total	18	16	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90(80)	80 (90)	95 (100)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	126
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y 6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.7
Average class size	29

Education support staff: YR– Y6

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	97

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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Total income	353,961
Total expenditure	346,275
Expenditure per pupil	2,439
Balance brought forward from previous year	10, 556
Balance carried forward to next year	18,242

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	145
Number of questionnaires returned	81

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	61	34	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	68	31	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	45	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	46	16	2	1
The teaching is good.	70	27	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	33	9	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	77	17	5	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	32	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	51	39	9	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	62	33	4	1	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	69	26	5	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	40	19	1	4

Other issues raised by parents

- The majority of parents say that they are very pleased that such a high quality education is available in Balcombe.
- Parents appreciate the way the school ensures that their children develop confidence and are well rounded by the time they leave the school at eleven years of age.
- Several parents also wrote to say that their children thrive in such happy and stimulating school environment.