

Balksbury Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115852
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	290346
Inspection dates	3–4 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Pritiben Patel

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	319
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Stubings
Headteacher	Mr D Coombs
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001
School address	Floral Way Salisbury Road Andover SP10 3QP
Telephone number	01264 365642
Fax number	01264 351348

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Balksbury is a large junior school. The majority of pupils are of White British origin with a small number from other backgrounds. A few pupils speak English as an additional language and two are at the early stages of learning the language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has been awarded the Enhanced Healthy Schools Award, Investors in People, ICT Mark and Arts Mark. An acting headteacher has been in place for two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Balksbury is a satisfactory and improving school with good features. The vast majority of parents hold it in high regard. For example a parent commented, 'We have been very impressed with the school; both our boys have made excellent progress and really enjoy school'. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They enter Year 3 with average attainment. They make satisfactory progress as they move through school and attain average standards by the end of Year 6. Some more able more are not achieving as well as they could. This level of basic skills prepares them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

The present headteacher has successfully led the school through a period of uncertainty. He has provided stability and ensured high morale amongst staff. A governor summed up the contribution of the headteacher, 'I am pleased how well the acting head has managed the school so well for the last two uncertain years'. He is ably supported by two assistant heads. Issues from the last inspection have been addressed effectively. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and pupils' behaviour have improved and the partnership with parents has been strengthened.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They have positive attitudes, behave well and enjoy the wide range of opportunities that are provided. Pupils' demonstrate safe practices in their school lives and make a good contribution to the school and wider communities. Pupils' adoption of healthy lifestyles is good as a result of the school's focus on healthy eating and its effective food policy.

The curriculum including extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities is good. The school has worked hard to develop a more practical and enjoyable curriculum for pupils. The Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. Teachers' use the interactive whiteboards to engage pupils and use talk partners well to encourage discussion. However, inconsistencies in teachers' marking mean that not all pupils are clear about their next steps for improvement. More able pupils are not always given challenging enough work to match their capabilities. At present the monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently rigorous to improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise standards.

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are satisfactory overall. Pastoral support is a particularly strong feature. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make satisfactory progress in line with their peers due to the effective support they receive. However, academic guidance is not as strong. Not all pupils have a clear understanding of their targets and of how they will help them to improve. The school has good links with secondary schools to ease transition. It has a particularly effective partnership with one of these which has helped to raise the attainment of more able pupils, in mathematics and science by sharing expertise and resources.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers challenge all pupils, particularly the more able, to achieve as well as they can in order to raise achievement.
- Monitor teaching and learning more rigorously to secure improvements and raise standards.
- Improve teachers' marking and the use of target setting so that all pupils are clear about their next steps for improvement.

A small proportion of the 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 including those with learning difficulties or disabilities make satisfactory progress. From the national test results there is clear evidence of steady improvement in standards. Two years ago pupils' attainment was below average but now it is average in English, mathematics and science. One of the key factors that have enabled this improvement is the major focus on the teaching of core skills. For example, pupils have been provided with greater opportunities to apply their skills to real life problems in mathematics. The profile of reading has been raised throughout the school and resources have been purchased specifically to raise boys' attainment in English. The school's recently introduced monitoring and assessment systems have also helped to identify the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning in core subjects in order to target support. However, more able pupils are not achieving as well as they should because they are not always sufficiently challenged in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They speak warmly of their school. One pupil enthusiastically described Balksbury as 'a brilliant school'. Pupils' enjoyment of school is also confirmed by their parents. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school at playtimes and lunchtimes is good, and pupils are friendly towards one another. They are excited by the large range of sporting activities which are available and participate fully. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory.

Pupils feel safe and are confident in the adults in the school, and believe that the school deals effectively with the small number of incidents of bullying. Pupils make good contributions to the school community, for instance through the school council, as house captains and through litter picking. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good as the school puts great emphasis on team work, co-operation and caring for one another through displays and in assemblies. Pupils know and understand different cultural beliefs and customs due to a range of visitors who share their knowledge and experiences with them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Good features include relationships between teachers and pupils and classroom management. Teachers are confident and have, on the whole, good subject knowledge. Discussions in class are facilitated effectively to ensure that all pupils are able to contribute. Questioning is purposeful and helps to keep pupils well motivated. Higher attaining pupils work diligently but are not always given work that is challenging enough for them to achieve even higher standards. Teachers make good use of ICT to support their teaching and pupils' learning. Teachers and pupils alike use the interactive white boards with confidence. Effective long-term planning is done collectively under the leadership of subject co-ordinators.

Teachers' mark pupils work regularly but often the marking, whilst celebrating the achievements of pupils, does not inform them of what they need to do to improve further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of clubs such as football, rounders, drama and art. These help to develop pupils' self esteem and sense of achievement particularly when they are awarded trophies for some of these activities during assembly. Improved ICT provision has had a positive impact on the development of pupils' skills. Inspectors saw interesting cross-curricular work such as a powerpoint presentation produced by a Year 5 pupil about Ancient Greece.

Links between subjects are not yet firmly embedded; consequently opportunities to add meaning to pupils learning are sometimes lost. Enrichment opportunities are a strong feature and impact positively on pupils' personal development and enjoyment. For example activities during art, mathematics and science week have not only raised the profile of these subjects but also helped to raise standards. Thoughtful and colourful displays throughout the entire school such as the patch-work quilt, Egyptian models and Roman clay pots demonstrate the positive attitudes and care that pupils have towards their work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral support is a strength and induction procedures are good. There is a positive atmosphere in the school which is demonstrated in good relationships between pupils and school staff, and in the views of parents that the school is supportive of their children. The support assistant responsible for emotional literacy makes an important contribution to the support of a large number of pupils, including those who are vulnerable. Child protection procedures are effective. Health and safety assessments related to the premises, and risk assessments of visits out of school, are secure. However, academic guidance is less secure. Arrangements to set targets for individual pupils in literacy and numeracy, are still in the process of developing, and are not yet sufficiently well established to have full impact on raising achievement. Also, due to inconsistencies in teachers' marking not all pupils are clear about their next steps for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting head has provided strong leadership along with his two acting assistants. Together they have successfully addressed areas from the last inspection as well as ensured that standards continue to rise. This leadership team, are leaving and the school will have a new team in September. The school is in a strong position to move forward but the new team will need to sustain the improvements. Consequently, the capacity to improve further is currently satisfactory.

Leaders at all levels support each other very well and are clearly focused on raising pupils' achievements. They know the school's strengths and areas for development and plan carefully to address any shortcomings. Literacy, numeracy and science co-ordinators play an effective role by monitoring standards through scrutiny of work and by interviewing pupils. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning is currently not sufficiently robust at all levels to ensure

improvement in teaching and learning and standards. The impact of the school's self evaluation is therefore only satisfactory at present.

There is now a full governing body in place that play a satisfactory role in the school's development. However, their key focus has been on appointing a new headteacher. They now need to develop their monitoring role as well as challenging school leaders.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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 disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Balksbury Junior School, Andover, SP10 3QP

On behalf of the inspectors I would like to thank you very much for being helpful when we came to visit your school. We really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and looking at your work.

You go to a satisfactory and improving school with good features. Here are the main reasons for this judgement:

- you make satisfactory progress and attain average results in tests because you have satisfactory teaching
- you get on very well with each other and your teachers' and as a result your behaviour is good
- you enjoy school because of the good curriculum that you are offered including a wide range of activities
- the adults in your school make sure that you are safe, happy and well looked after
- the headteacher, governors and staff work hard on your behalf.

We believe that some things can be improved in your school. We believe that if you have even better teaching than you do at the moment, you will get higher standards by the end of Year 6, and those of you who are capable should receive more challenging work. We have also asked your teachers to use your targets and tell you through their marking what you should do to improve your work. I am sure that you will rise to this challenge and continue to work as hard as you can!

With best wishes for your future success,

Pritiben Patel

Lead inspector