

# Upton Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118489
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	291147
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Selwyn Ward

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	514
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Shaw
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gill Metcalf
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 June 2001
<b>School address</b>	Edge End Road Broadstairs CT10 2AH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01843 861393
<b>Fax number</b>	01843 608498

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<b>Age group</b>	7–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

In this very large school, an average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties. Pupils join Year 3 having attained broadly average scores in their Year 2 national assessments. The school has a Healthy School Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Though satisfactory overall, this is an improving school with many good and some outstanding features. Parents are especially pleased that the school 'promotes and develops well-rounded individuals'. One described how 'my daughter's confidence has grown'. Pupils really enjoy school. Pupils' personal development is good because of the good care, guidance and support which helps ensure that pupils feel safe and secure. Even more so, however, it is due to the outstanding curriculum, which gives pupils a chance to excel in a much wider range of activities than commonly seen. A parent commented how the school had succeeded in 'inspiring my daughter to enjoy science and geography – subjects she used to find boring'. Another expressed delight in the way 'the school has given my son the chance to shine in areas that may not be given such importance in other schools'.

Although parents have overwhelmingly favourable views, a number voice concerns over communication, which some feel inhibits their opportunities to support the school and their own child's learning. Several parents feel that expectations of homework are not made clear enough, so they do not know how much homework they should expect their children to have or the extent to which they should be helping. Some parents of pupils with learning difficulties cite examples where details of their child's specific needs have not been communicated to all their teachers.

Achievement in the school is satisfactory rather than better because standards in English, mathematics and science are average overall. In recent years, pupils have done notably better in English than in mathematics. Although efforts to boost standards in mathematics in 2006 were not successful, measures this year, focusing on basic methods of calculation, have been more effective and standards in the subject are now improving throughout the school. There is much good teaching in the school, but teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good because teachers do not always explain clearly enough to pupils what they are expected to learn. They do not always allow enough time at the end of lessons for pupils to confirm and reinforce what they have learnt. Where teachers are insufficiently focused on the learning that is going on, it limits the progress that pupils make. One of the good features of teaching is the way teachers use other subjects to boost pupils' literacy skills. Some teachers miss similar opportunities to practise and reinforce numeracy through other subjects.

When school leaders monitor lessons, they also tend to focus on aspects of teaching rather than on the learning. It is this, and the need to improve communication, that means that leadership and management are satisfactory overall, despite many good features. The headteacher, governors and leadership team have been particularly successful in creating a school where there is a buzz of excitement and enthusiasm – from pupils and staff alike. It is a tribute to the school that so many of the Year 6 pupils say how sad they will be to leave Upton Junior at the end of the year.

The school has an accurate picture of how well it is doing. Its many successes and the improvements this year in mathematics and science show that the school has good capacity for continued improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers focus on identifying and assessing exactly what pupils are expected to learn in each lesson.

- Give pupils more opportunities to practise and reinforce their numeracy in other subjects.
- Improve communication so that all teachers know each pupil's individual learning needs and parents are given clear guidance on expectations of homework. 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**

Standards are above average in English. They are broadly average in mathematics and science and average overall. This represents satisfactory achievement overall. It represents good achievement in English. In mathematics, it also represents a significant improvement on 2005 and 2006, when standards in the subject were below average. Curriculum changes this year to focus on basic calculation skills in mathematics and investigation skills in science have succeeded in raising standards throughout the school.

Some pupils with learning difficulties make less progress than they could because not all of the teachers of the English and mathematics sets are made fully aware of each child's individual learning needs. By contrast, able pupils do well. The school has a consistently strong track record of '11-plus' success, with twice as many pupils winning selective school places than the average for the locality. The school does not just concentrate on academic subjects, however. Its many successes in music and sport, in particular, attest to the high standards achieved across the wider curriculum.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are courteous and considerate towards each other and are helpful to visitors. They learn to explore their own feelings and to understand those of other people, for example, those of evacuees in the Second World War. Pupils develop a good understanding of a wide range of different cultures, benefiting from the links that Upton Junior has established with schools across three continents.

Attendance is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school, where they feel safe because the rare instances of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Behaviour is good and pupils are generally attentive in lessons, although sometimes their attention wanes when they are left listening passively for too long. Pupils appreciate the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, as exemplified by their excellent participation in the great variety of sporting activities which the school offers. Pupils enjoy many opportunities to take responsibility: they make an outstanding contribution to the school and the wider community by, for example, representing their class on the school council, helping to run the library, raising money for charities, and taking part in musical performances and sporting competitions outside the school. Pupils feel that their views are taken seriously and were pleased to be involved in the appointment of their next headteacher. They understand that they are developing skills, such as problem solving and decision making, which will serve them well in later life.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Lesson planning is detailed, helping pupils to build on what they have done before. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge, although some are more confident when teaching English than when teaching mathematics and science. While they find many opportunities for pupils to use and develop their literacy skills in other subjects, teachers sometimes miss similar opportunities to reinforce numeracy, for example, by making calculations when looking at history timelines. Teachers routinely set out success criteria for lessons and share these with the pupils, but too often these comprise a list of tasks to be carried out rather than a clear expectation of what the pupils should be learning. Sometimes insufficient time is allowed at the end of a lesson to reinforce the main learning points.

Most lessons cater for the range of different needs of pupils, even when they are taught in ability sets. However, although more-able pupils generally make good progress, teachers sometimes set activities that do not provide enough challenge for lower-attaining pupils, and some of those with learning difficulties, to ensure that they make as much progress as they could. There are examples of good marking that gives guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve their work, but some really only acknowledges that the work has been done. Parents and pupils report that the amount and frequency of homework also varies between classes.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

Pupils greatly appreciate that the school offers a range of exciting topics and activities that broadens their horizons and makes school 'a fun place to be'. Provision for English is good and has resulted in consistently good achievement in this subject. It has improved significantly this year in mathematics and science, and this is resulting in rising standards. The provision for music, sports and modern foreign languages is outstanding and the school makes good use of links with local secondary schools to enrich the curriculum, particularly for gifted and talented pupils. There is specialist language teaching and pupils make biennial visits to a French school and write to French pen friends. Sports play an integral part in developing healthy lifestyles and a competitive spirit; the boys' swimming team qualified for the finals of the English Schools Swimming Association competition. The choir takes part in charity concerts with the Thanet Male Voice Choir, raising money for various charities.

Upton Junior benefits from some first-rate facilities, substantially extended and improved since the last inspection. For example, provision for information and communication technology is greatly enhanced by the school's spacious technology suite that enables whole classes to be taught together, with a computer available to each pupil.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Pupils and their parents appreciate the secure arrangements for pupils' welfare, and requirements for safeguarding children are fully met. The school liaises closely with its feeder schools to ensure that new pupils settle in well, and with local secondary schools to make sure that pupils face with confidence the challenge of moving on to the next phase of their education. The

school knows its pupils well: the progress of vulnerable groups, including looked-after children and pupils with learning difficulties, is carefully monitored. There have been occasions, however, when some teachers have not been fully aware of some of these children's specific learning needs. Nevertheless, the school can point to several success stories of children who have made very significant progress thanks to the individual help they have received.

Parents receive regular reports on their children's progress but some express concern about the difficulties they perceive they have in communicating with the school. Pupils have targets to help them improve their work, but they do not always know what these are.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher and school leaders are strongly focused on raising standards and ensuring the personal development and well-being of pupils. They have been particularly effective in establishing a school with an exciting curriculum, where pupils want to work hard and do well. Self-evaluation is thorough so that senior staff and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Improvement in mathematics has been rightly identified as a key priority. Changes have been made to address this and they have been successful this year, but the school has not always made rigorous and systematic checks to ensure that action has made a difference. In 2006, it was only at the end of the school year that it was discovered that initiatives to improve standards had not been effective.

Assessment procedures have improved and are leading to more accurate judgements about pupils' progress. Lessons are monitored, although the monitoring has tended to focus on what the teacher is doing rather than on the impact on pupils' learning. The school recognises that if parents have concerns over communication, such as about the expectations for homework, then that is an issue that needs to be improved. It has also acknowledged that communication to all staff of the individual needs of pupils with learning difficulties has not been as thorough as it should be.

Governors are enthusiastic and support the school well. They are committed to ensuring the well-being and personal development of both pupils and staff.

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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	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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 the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	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

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

31 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Upton Junior School, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 2AH

Thank you all for making us so welcome and helping us when we visited your school.

Your school is giving you a sound education in mathematics and science, and you do well in English. What many of you especially appreciate are all the fantastic things you do in other subjects, particularly in music and sport. The other inspectors and I enjoyed as much as you did the events we saw in World Music Week. We'll be watching out for your swimming team's success in the national finals.

The school looks after you well and we were impressed with how well behaved you are and your enthusiasm in lessons. It is also good to see such a sensible attitude to healthy eating and exercise. I'm sorry I didn't get a chance to join your fun run.

The teaching is satisfactory overall, but there is quite a lot of good teaching. We think the teaching would be even better if the school made sure that all teachers set you 'success criteria' that explained what they want you to learn and not just what they want you to do. We want them also to make sure teachers allow enough time at the end of lessons to check with you what you've learnt and if there is anything you don't understand. We think it would also help improve your mathematics if teachers found more opportunities for you to use your numeracy skills in other subjects.

The headteacher and school leaders have a clear picture of the many things your school does well and of those things that could be improved. Some of your parents have asked for more information about what the school expects from homework. A few were worried that some of the teachers who take some of your sets were not always aware of the extra help that some of you need with your learning. We have asked the school to improve both of these things.

You can help the school too by continuing to work hard and do your best and by making sure you all know and try to achieve your targets.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you.

Yours faithfully Selwyn Ward Lead Inspector