

# Balliol Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109464
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	309993
<b>Inspection date</b>	1 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anna Coyle

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	257
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	71
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Christine Clifford
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Kylie Story
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 November 2004
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Balliol Road Kempston Bedford Bedfordshire MK42 7ER
<b>Telephone number</b>	01234 300601
<b>Fax number</b>	01234 300602

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<b>Age group</b>	3–9
<b>Inspection date</b>	1 October 2008
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- Achievement throughout the school, especially in Years 3 and 4, and particularly in speaking and listening.
- Children's behaviour and attendance.
- The leadership and management of the school.

The inspectors gathered evidence from observations of lessons, samples of pupils' work, discussions with pupils, staff and the chair of the governors, and from the parents' questionnaires. The main documents used by the school in monitoring and strategic planning were examined. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as provided in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This is an average-sized school that serves the local community of Kempston, which is south west of Bedford. Most children are White British. A slightly higher proportion than nationally learn English as an additional language and many of them are at an early stage of language acquisition. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that of other schools overall, although it is much higher in some year groups. A very high proportion of children are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has achieved the Activemark and the Healthy Schools award and is currently working towards the Artsmark award.

The school provides for 71 children from the ages of 3 to 5 years in its recently remodelled Foundation Stage Unit. Attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is much lower than expected for the children's ages when they first enter the Nursery, particularly in personal, social and emotional development. Additional childcare provision is made for 44 children between the ages of 3 and 9 years in the breakfast and after-school club, which is run by the school.

There is also an established pre-school and a new children's centre on site, which are both privately run.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school that provides an effective education for its children. It has improved well since the last inspection and has some outstanding features. The school evaluates its performance accurately and is held in high regard by parents and the community. As one parent commented, reflecting the view of many: The school is... 'great for making children feel special and remembering special dates with cards, and always praises children when they have worked hard'.

From low starting points, children achieve well throughout the school and make good progress. During their time in the Foundation Stage Unit, they learn and develop effectively, building exceptionally well on their personal, social and emotional development. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been variable since the last inspection. In the 2007 national assessments for Key Stage 1, the proportion of children reaching the expected level in reading was below the national average, as was the percentage reaching the higher levels, but similar to the national picture in writing and mathematics. More recently, the improved results for 2008 show that standards are now broadly average overall in all areas. Of significance, is the very clear upward trend in the tests for mathematics since 2005. This is due to the school's strong focus on the subject and the hard work of the staff, which has borne fruit and led to the children's success. The strategies adopted are now being extended to help push up standards in Years 3 and 4 where attainment is still slightly below the expected levels in speaking, listening, reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 4. Children do notably well in art and have produced plenty of good, colourful work for the excellent displays in the school on themes, such as 'Under the Sea'.

Most children behave well and attend regularly, although a small minority are poorly behaved and a few are frequently absent from school. Nevertheless, the school works hard to help them and co-operates well with parents through the good use of learning support staff and external agencies to help increase home-school links. The breakfast and after-school club also provides effectively for the children and is well-attended. Personal development and well-being are good. Most children love coming to school and have an excellent enjoyment of learning. They know about the need to have a healthy diet and understand the importance of taking regular exercise. Children's good achievement in their literacy, numeracy and social skills and ability to work harmoniously together prepare them well for the next stages of their education. Crucial to this is that the school cares extremely well for its children and safeguards their welfare rigorously. This means that children learn in a safe environment in which adults provide excellent pastoral care and close guidance to help them achieve well. Arrangements to track children's progress are effective, as is the support for those who require additional help with their learning and language acquisition.

Teaching and learning are good overall. They are sometimes outstanding when challenging activities capture children's interest and effectively fire their imaginations so that they work hard and strive to do their best. Good opportunities for them to learn independently or work together in groups are met with great enthusiasm, and competent teaching assistants help to make lessons interesting. Classrooms are clean, bright, cheerful places in which to learn. Teachers assess progress accurately and children are often inspired to do well by the positive feedback they are given when teachers and other children congratulate them for their efforts by clapping cheerfully. Occasionally, teaching is only satisfactory when it does not take sufficient account of children's learning needs and tasks are either too hard or too easy. Similarly, the pace of

learning slows when the poor behaviour of a few children is not managed effectively. Nonetheless, the school's good curriculum has a strong focus on developing children's creativity, which provides plenty of stimulating learning experiences, including a good range of extra-curricular activities. Academic guidance is good. Staff have developed effective systems for tracking and monitoring each individual's progress. Children know how well they are doing and have suitable targets to guide their work. Children in Year 4 enjoy keeping a check on their own progress by completing their records known as 'Learning Journey Mountains'.

The leadership provided by the headteacher is outstanding. Her excellent vision and high level of commitment provides the drive needed to raise standards and increase children's achievement. She is very well supported by her conscientious deputy and senior management team who all work together closely for the benefit of the children. Other staff are developing their leadership roles satisfactorily in areas such as information and communication technology (ICT) and the provision for English as an additional language (EAL). The school's priorities for improvement are set out clearly in its very well structured school development plan. It rightly identifies the need to focus more on improving children's speaking and listening skills, as well as increasing the achievement of boys and the most able and those who have EAL needs. Leaders do much to ensure the school makes a good contribution to the community it serves. Governors provide a very keen critical eye and are rightly proud of the school. Many are regular visitors and are involved fully in evaluating provision. Consequently, the school has outstanding capacity for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children get off to a good start in the new Foundation Stage Unit. From low beginnings, they make good progress and achieve well by the time they move up into Year 1. Children do particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development and progress is excellent in this area of learning. They settle into school routines quickly, play happily together and learn to share and to make choices. This is because the Nursery and Reception groups are integrated carefully so that children learn to mix with each other and develop their social skills very effectively through a wide range of exciting and purposeful play activities. Aspects of language, such as speaking and listening, which are well below those typically found on entry, are also developed effectively. Good teaching results in children being enthusiastic about learning. This stems from the staff taking excellent care of the children and making sure that they are safe at all times. They keep a watchful eye on them to ensure high levels of welfare, care and safety. The teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills is firmly based on practical tasks that appeal to children, and the good curriculum includes a suitable mix of adult-led tasks and activities that children choose for themselves.

Adults assess and monitor children's progress carefully so that all move on well in their learning, including those who require extra help with their learning or have EAL needs. New procedures have been introduced for teaching letter sounds to support children's writing and these are having a positive effect on achievement. Staff also intend to develop the use of ICT to include opportunities for children to use an interactive whiteboard. As a result of these good features, children grow in confidence and independence so that by the time they leave the Reception year they reach some of the expected goals for their age and, although standards are still below average overall because they have so much to learn, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The provision is well led and managed. It has been improved effectively since the last inspection due to the excellent teamwork amongst adults and clear direction from

the EYFS leader. Close links with parents benefit children's learning and these are being developed further to help increase home-school relationships.

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

- Spread the best practice in teaching so that it is consistently good in all classes by making sure that work is always well matched to children's needs and any inappropriate behaviour is effectively managed.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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



## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Annex B

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

Dear Children

Inspection of Balliol Lower School, Kempston, Bedford, MK42 7ER

Thank you for welcoming us into your school recently and for talking to us about your school. This letter is to let you know what we found out.

- You go to a good school where all the adults take care of you extremely well and make sure that you are safe.
- You work hard and make good progress in your learning.
- Most of you behave well and really enjoy all the things you do at school.
- The teaching is good and lessons are interesting.
- Classrooms are clean, bright, cheerful places to learn in with lots of colourful displays of your work.
- Leaders are very good at checking on how well the school is doing and what to do to improve it.

We have asked the adults at your school to look at how they can make things even better. The most important thing is to:

- Make sure that all lessons are good by giving you the right level of work and making sure that everyone behaves well all of the time.

You can help by continuing to work hard and enjoying all the things you do.

Dr Anna Coyle

Lead inspector