

# Balksbury Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	116063
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hampshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	312166
<b>Inspection date</b>	6 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Marshall

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>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	265
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs S Hindle
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs P Murley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 December 2003
<b>School address</b>	Floral Way Salisbury Road Andover SP10 3QP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01264 352801
<b>Fax number</b>	01264 338454

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<b>Age group</b>	4-7
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the pupils' achievement and progress, pupils' personal development and well-being, and the effectiveness of leadership and management. In addition, evidence was gathered from discussions and school documentation to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included in this report.

## Description of the school

Balksbury is a larger-than-average infant school. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of particular need, is in line with the national average. The percentage of children whose first language is other than English is slightly higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils who start or leave the school other than at the normal time is higher than average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Balksbury Infants is an outstanding school. The school provides an exciting range of activities in a welcoming and inspiring environment. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and thrive in their academic and personal development. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. Her drive and enthusiasm draw out the best from all in the school - both staff and pupils. She is exceptionally well supported by the deputy headteacher, staff and governors. They know the pupils very well and are constantly looking for ways to make the school even better. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One summed up their views by saying, 'This is a great school in every aspect and I am more than proud that my children attend it.'

When children start school, their skills and understanding are generally below those expected for their age. By the time they enter Year 1, they have made excellent progress and achieved very well and standards are above those expected for children of their age. National assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2 show that standards have been consistently well above average in the last five years. In 2007, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected levels in writing, reading, mathematics and science was again well above average, and the proportions achieving the higher Level 3 in reading and mathematics was exceptionally high. All pupils, whatever their ability, achieve outstandingly well.

Teaching and learning throughout the school are never less than good, and are often outstanding. Observations and assessments by teachers of what the pupils know and can do are excellent. The information gained is used outstandingly well to guide and challenge pupils and to move them rapidly on to the next stage in their learning. The rich curriculum covers all subjects very well. The staff provide countless opportunities for individual pupils to shine by linking areas of learning, and providing additional extra-curricular activities. These ensure that pupils' learning is as exciting and relevant as they can make it. The pupils themselves said that they particularly enjoy the many clubs and 'special whizzy-weeks' where all lessons are based on a theme.

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are outstanding. All pupils, whatever their needs, are given sensitive, caring help that is tailored to their individual pastoral and academic needs. Pupils who have statements of particular special need make exceptionally good progress. National data shows they progress at well above average rates. This is because intervention and support is very carefully focused and monitored, using the school's detailed tracking. By being so closely involved with decisions about all pupils, the excellent support staff make an outstanding contribution to the pupils' development.

The school has very thorough procedures in place for safeguarding pupils. Pupils say that they feel very safe and happy, and they also have a very good awareness of how to eat and live healthily. They are eager participants in all of the school's physical activities. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils' relationships with each other and with staff are excellent. The way they revelled in the success of others in the reward assembly was a joy to see. By the time they leave the school, pupils mature into well-rounded individuals because of their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their contribution to their own community, through the school council and being reading partners, is excellent. Parents, who enjoy a close relationship with the school, are very pleased about this. One wrote, 'Balksbury School has a really lovely 'feel' to it where every child is known - a real family atmosphere, We cannot praise them highly enough.' The pupils' high standards in reading, writing and mathematics, excellent

relationships and skills in working together prepare them excellently for the next stage of their education.

The impact of the outstanding leadership at all levels is seen in the excellent progress made by the pupils. All staff respond eagerly to new initiatives and responsibility. As one parent wrote, 'The quality of the teaching staff - their commitment, enthusiasm and professionalism is the strongest point of the school.' The foundations of the school's success lie in the staff's commitment in following the headteacher's exemplary lead to meet the needs of all. Teamwork is excellent and the administrative team are a considerable asset to the school and are very much appreciated by all concerned. The school has an excellent track record of achieving high standards and their capacity to improve is excellent. This is largely due to the fact that the school knows itself very well. All staff are clear about the school's strengths and areas for development because of rigorous self-evaluation. Priorities are sharply focused and staff are held to account in meeting challenging targets. The outstanding governing body is fully involved in this process, challenging decisions and requesting explanations where necessary. The wide range of skills they bring to their work is currently focusing on the necessity of finding ways to fulfil the plans, well articulated by the school council, to enhance the outside learning opportunities for the main school.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Children make an excellent start to their education in the Reception classes. The huge level of commitment and care shown by all Foundation Stage staff is evident in the excellent quality of relationships with playgroups and home visits. As a result, children settle into the school extremely well and immediately begin to learn. Their attainment on entry is often below expectations for their age, with an increasing number arriving with low levels of language and communication skills. Staff get to know all the children very well. They make a careful note of all responses and feedback. The information collected about children is used particularly well to ensure that the least able and most vulnerable settle well. Adults have high expectations, provide very clear routines and enable children to build strong, positive relationships. Careful planning creates a very good balance between formal and creative work and encourages the children to be independent. One parent summed up the success of this Reception area by writing, 'Our child adores school and is doing very well. All her teachers are helpful and accommodating. We have to keep reminding ourselves that she is only 4!' ' The enjoyment of the children as they selected and concentrated on one of the many activities related to Jack and the Beanstalk was particularly impressive. The rooms are stimulating and resources are used well as children move from one to another. A very calm and purposeful atmosphere is created where the children are already making excellent progress.

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

- Make every effort to bring to fruition the carefully put together plans for enhancing the outside learning areas.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	1

### The quality of provision

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

<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>	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

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

19 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Balksbury Infant School, Andover, SP10 3QP

Thank you for making me so welcome in your school and talking to me about your feelings, ambitions and thoughts. It was a delight to meet you and I really enjoyed looking at your work and joining in your lessons.

I am glad to tell you that I think your school is outstanding and provides you with a really good start to your education. I was particularly pleased with these things:

- your headteacher and staff do a super job in organising the school and looking after you
- you all really enjoy being in school
- you are all making excellent progress with your work
- you behave very well, work hard and listen carefully to your teachers - all of this helps you to succeed
- all the adults in the school look after you very carefully. They always make sure that you get help if you need it.

Your teachers and support staff work hard to help you to do as well as you can. I agree with your school council and I have asked the headteacher and all staff to work as hard as they can to put in place all the plans you have made for the outside areas around the school.

I wish you well in the future and hope that you will always be as happy as you are at Balksbury Infant School.

David Marshall

Lead Inspector