

# Featherby Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118420
<b>Local Authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	312932
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30–31 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Timothy Feast

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	342
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Kevin Behn
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Green
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Chilham Road Gillingham ME8 6BT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 231984
<b>Fax number</b>	01634 263279

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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

Attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with expectations for the age of the pupils. There are relatively few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning disabilities and/or difficulties (LDD) is well above national figures. Most year groups have considerably more pupils of one gender than the other, generally more boys than girls.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy coming to school and they behave well. Pupils feel safe and valued in the school because of the school's effective care and support procedures. Academic guidance is satisfactory but is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistently good progress for all pupils. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils' engagement in physical activities is good but too few respond positively to guidance on healthy eating.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Most pupils make the progress expected of them but too few are doing better than that. Higher-attaining pupils progress satisfactorily and attain standards above those expected nationally. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress against the targets set for them. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress in acquiring English language skills. These groups of pupils progress well because of the quality of support they receive. Too few middle-ability pupils make good progress because the targets set for them are not sufficiently challenging. The school's practice of dividing teaching groups by ability for English, mathematics and science does not help to meet their needs well enough. The curriculum promotes pupils' personal and creative development appropriately, but there are insufficient opportunities for independent learning.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Senior leaders and governors are successful in meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties, and of those with EAL. The school works well with other organisations to enhance pupils' well-being. The school's leadership has had a good impact on raising standards in writing and improving attendance. There are systems in place for tracking pupils' academic progress and for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. The analysis of this information has not accelerated sufficiently the rate of pupils' progress or ensured that suitably challenging targets are set, to which all pupils and teachers can aspire. The governors are supportive of the school but they are not fully effective in their role as 'critical friend'. The school's current actions to raise standards and develop provision show that it has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the school's expectation of the progress that pupils should make across Years 3 to 6, especially in science and those of average attainment.
- Provide better academic guidance to all pupils, but especially those of average attainment, to clarify what they have to do to make good progress.
- Provide greater opportunities for all pupils to develop their skills of working independently.
- Focus monitoring activities more closely on the impact of provision on pupils' progress and use that information to assist strategic planning.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Standards in Year 6 dipped to below-average levels in 2006 and 2007, having been historically broadly average. These results reflected both the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties in both year groups and the greater number of boys. Girls attained standards broadly in line with girls nationally but the boys did less well. Pupils with learning difficulties generally performed better than similar pupils did nationally. However, in both years, achievement dipped in relation to pupils' starting points. The main reason for this was that too few pupils of average

ability on entry made good progress to reach standards above the national expectation, especially in science.

Pupils' progress has improved this year and it is now satisfactory. There is still a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties in each year group. In Year 6, standards in mathematics are broadly in line with expectations and, in English, just below them. This represents satisfactory progress for these pupils when compared to their results in the school's assessments shortly after they started at the school in Year 3. Throughout the rest of the school, the progress of pupils is improving and in some teaching groups, for example, in writing, it is good. Progress in science is not as good as in English and mathematics.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Staff are committed to promoting pupils' personal development and ensuring their well-being. As a result, most pupils, including those with learning difficulties, build up their confidence and self-esteem. They enjoy school, particularly the opportunities to take part in competitive activities, including representing the school in teams. Their attitudes to learning generally are good. Attendance is above the national average. Most pupils attend regularly but the overall figure masks the fact that one in seven pupils averages at least half a day's absence per week. Pupils' abilities to work independently and to show initiative are satisfactory. Their basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information communication and technology (ICT) are satisfactory and pupils contribute appropriately to society, both within and outside school, whilst developing a satisfactory understanding of citizenship.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory. Their response to opportunities for spiritual development is satisfactory, for example, in assemblies. Their understanding of social and moral issues is more positive, for example, in relation to bullying. Cultural development has strengths in pupils' knowledge and understanding of music and art from a variety of cultures. Nevertheless, the school agrees that there is insufficient emphasis on celebrating the rich cultural diversity that makes up modern Britain.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teachers have good strategies for managing pupils' behaviour, which results in calm and orderly lessons, with most pupils well disposed to learning. For the most part, teachers create productive relationships with pupils and involve them well in learning. A few pupils do not respond positively, taking a passive approach to learning. Teachers have not been universally successful in overcoming this barrier to pupils' learning. Work is marked regularly with positive comments and praise, but there is insufficient guidance on how to improve to the next level.

Teaching groups are organised by pupils' ability in English, mathematics and science lessons. Teachers set appropriately challenging work for the more able pupils and this helps them to reach above-average standards. Teachers do not plan as effectively for pupils of average ability and this sometimes puts a ceiling on their achievement. Learning assistants usually support lower-attaining pupils and those with specific needs. Their input helps most of these pupils to make good progress in their learning. There are too few opportunities for all pupils to develop their skills of working independently.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum provides pupils with an appropriate range of experiences that promote satisfactory progress. Its strength is the opportunities it provides for pupils' physical development, particularly through the extensive range of enrichment activities. A high proportion of the pupils engage in the clubs and activities and parents think, 'There's always activities to keep the children interested in learning inside and out of school'. The curriculum provides pupils with interesting activities that sustain their concentration levels throughout the school day. It successfully promotes the improvement of speaking and listening skills and effectively supports pupils' emotional development. The science curriculum is under-developed and this results in many pupils lacking skills and confidence in problem solving and scientific investigations.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The school provides effective support for pupils' personal, social and emotional development in all year groups, helping most pupils to grow in confidence and develop their self-esteem. Parents have an accurate view that their children are well cared for. Child protection procedures are robust, as are the health and safety checks and as a result, pupils feel safe. Support for vulnerable pupils is a strength of the school and enables them to make satisfactory progress or better against their individual targets.

The school works well in partnership with the parents, although a few parents believe that the school should listen more closely to their concerns. It has effective links with a wide range of agencies that provide specialist support and guidance. The systems for checking and improving attendance are not fully effective in tackling persistent absence amongst a small minority of pupils. Effective procedures are in place to enable pupils to settle quickly when they start at the school and to prepare Year 6 pupils for secondary education.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. Some targets are not sufficiently challenging, especially those for pupils of average attainment. This is because they do not encourage pupils sufficiently to aspire beyond making satisfactory progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The school's leadership deals appropriately with day-to-day issues, including pastoral and welfare matters. The school runs smoothly. Parents are supportive of the school and value the work it does. Leaders are pursuing strategies to raise standards and improve provision. The focus on improving writing has been successful and pupils' progress is quickening.

The management structure is in the process of being re-organised to reflect school priorities. Currently, middle managers do not have enough time to take their areas of responsibility forward and this was a criticism in the last inspection report. School leaders have an appropriate knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, their judgements in some areas are overly optimistic, reflecting insufficient emphasis on evaluating the impact of what they do on pupils' achievements.

Improvement planning is satisfactory but limited in time-scale. There is insufficient planning for the longer term, particularly in plotting the steps needed to reach ambitious targets for pupils' progress. Financial planning is satisfactory but the governors' nervousness about future pupil numbers limits their ability to be more positive in pursuing initiatives that will have an impact on pupil progress.

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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?	3
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	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

<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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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**

5 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Featherby Junior School, Gillingham ME8 6BT

Thank you for helping us with the inspection and making us feel welcome in the school. We enjoyed talking with you about your work and about the school during our recent visit. We think your school gives you a satisfactory education. You are making satisfactory progress but we believe some of you could do even better and reach even higher standards. We have asked the school to help you by challenging you to make this better progress, especially those of you who are capable of reaching higher levels than those expected of children of your age. We have asked the school to give you better support on how to reach these higher levels and to give you more opportunities to work independently. We have asked the school leaders to look at things like teaching and the ways they organise classes to see how well they support you in making good progress.

In every class, we saw most of you working hard and enjoying your lessons. The adults help you well in lessons and around the school and the teaching helps you make satisfactory progress. You are safe and well cared for. Most of you attend school regularly but a number of you miss about half a day a week and this affects your progress. You enjoy all the extra activities and like to keep active. You know about healthy eating but a lot of you do not follow the advice you are given.

We are sure that your school will continue to improve and that you will continue to enjoy your time there. We wish you all success this year and in the future. With best wishes

Tim Feast Lead inspector