

Balksbury Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115852
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	338670
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Merchant

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 of pupils on the school roll	283
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lee Cherrington
Headteacher	Pamela Simpson
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons and observed 12 teachers. They held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They also talked to some parents and carers who were present at the start and finish of the school day. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its improvement plan, minutes of meetings of the governing body, data on pupils' progress, records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching and a range of school policies. They also analysed questionnaires received from 102 parents and carers and 97 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' attainment and progress, particularly of higher-attaining pupils and all pupils in English and mathematics
- how well the teaching motivates and provides challenge for all pupils, but particularly the higher attainers, and how well teachers help all pupils to improve their work
- the effectiveness of the curriculum in inspiring all pupils, but particularly the most able, in their learning the effectiveness of all leaders, especially subject leaders and the governing body, in checking attainment, progress and teaching and contributing to the school's improvement.

Information about the school

This school is larger than most other primary schools. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly moderate learning difficulties, is similar to that typically found, but the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The headteacher is leaving the school at the end of this academic year to take up a headship of another school. A permanent headteacher has not yet been appointed and the school will be temporarily led by the headteacher of a neighbouring school.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Pupils join the school with skills and abilities that are well above average. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is low and has declined over the past three years. Although there are signs that attainment has risen this year, it is not enough to make up for previously lost ground. Consequently, too many pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable.

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Teachers do not plan their lessons well enough to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities in their classes, particularly higher attainers, and the pace of learning is too often pedestrian. The time at the end of lessons is not used well enough to check what pupils have learned and highlight what they need to do to improve further. Pupils spend too much time listening to the teacher, with limited opportunities to work with each other or on their own to develop, use and apply their learning and skills. Good practice does exist but it is not shared well enough. Teachers mark books regularly but the advice they give to pupils as to how to improve their work is of inconsistent quality.

The school's self-evaluation is not well founded in a careful analysis of its performance. Consequently, school development planning lacks precision; it is not clear how success is identified and built upon. This, coupled with a decline in pupils' outcomes, insufficient progress in tackling the issues from the last inspection and a decline in many aspects of the school's provision since the last inspection, means that the capacity to sustain improvement is inadequate. The governing body, while supportive of the school, has not held the senior leaders to account for low standards and pupils' inadequate progress. The headteacher has shouldered too much responsibility. In particular, the role of the deputy headteacher has not been well enough developed and too few staff have a shared ambition to move the school forward.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment across the school so that a very large majority of pupils make good or better progress each academic year, through:
 - improving the quality of teaching so that 80% of it is good or better,

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- particularly with reference to pace and challenge and providing clearer direction to pupils on how to improve their work
- providing more opportunities for pupils to talk about, use and apply their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Increase the effectiveness of the school's leaders and the governing body in driving school improvement by ensuring:
 - self-evaluation is more frequent, rigorous and realistic
 - the school development plan gives a clear sense of direction, identifies exactly what steps are to be taken and has identified points at which the impact can be measured
 - the governing body plays an active role in challenging the school regarding pupils' outcomes and routinely evaluate its policies the quality of teaching is monitored more rigorously and frequently, and that staff training is targeted on the precise improvement areas.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Pupils' enjoyment of school is satisfactory, though few pupils show eagerness in lessons. They know how to stay healthy and have a good understanding for their age about how to stay safe. During the inspection, pupils were lively, asked questions and were keen to talk to inspectors about their school. Weaknesses in teaching on occasions lead to inappropriate behaviour in lessons which holds back learning, particularly that of girls. Nevertheless, behaviour is satisfactory overall. Pupils from all backgrounds work and play together well and have a reasonable awareness of the different ways of life in other communities. However, pupils' low attainment and weak progress in their basic skills mean that they are inadequately prepared for the next phase of their education and beyond.

Work in pupils' books confirms that pupils' achievement is inadequate in relation to their well-above-average starting points. Results in the end of Year 6 tests have fallen to below average overall in recent years. The recent improvement in attainment in English and mathematics, particularly of higher attaining pupils, is not enough to make up for the legacy of underachievement. Progress is slow in too many lessons. Pupils often spend too long on tasks that do little to extend or develop their skills or sustain their interest. Learning is held back because too many teachers expect too little of pupils, particularly those who learn at a fast rate. Consequently, pupils spend much time listening to teachers talking rather than learning from each other and finding things out for themselves. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the pupils lost interest and made slow progress because the work did not keep them actively involved. In another lesson, pupils were repeating work they had successfully completed the previous day. The school's tracking information indicates that the progress made by pupils since the beginning of the academic year has improved but is still too variable. The staff have a good understanding of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and well-targeted support ensures they often make better progress than that

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of their classmates.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Parents agree that their children are looked after well. Child protection procedures are rigorous. The care for vulnerable pupils through the alternative curriculum in the nurture group is particularly effective. Good links with specialists help pupils with their learning, social skills and emotional development. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong and helps them to make satisfactory and sometimes good progress.

The satisfactory curriculum has an appropriate focus on developing pupils' skills in English and mathematics and the school is forging links between subjects so that pupils can practise writing skills more regularly. However, these opportunities are not yet extensive enough to increase progress, and pupils have relatively few opportunities to use and apply their basic skills in different contexts. In science, progress is sometimes restricted because teachers do not always ensure that pupils have appropriate opportunities to develop their investigational skills.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Although there are significant pockets of good teaching, too much is inadequate or barely satisfactory and this has led to pupils not making the progress of which they are capable. In effective lessons, teachers make clear their expectations of what pupils are expected to do and achieve, move learning on at a brisk pace and not a moment is lost. Consequently, in these better lessons, pupils often work with eagerness and pride. Too many lessons, however, are dull and unimaginative and pupils are not motivated or inspired to learn. Teachers often talk for too long, which limits the opportunities pupils have to take a more active part in lessons. Pupils are sometimes given activities that are either not challenging enough or too hard, and their learning is then restricted.

Assessment procedures to check pupils' progress have improved recently. Consequently, teachers are more aware of the progress different groups of pupils make, including those who need to make up lost ground. However, most teachers do not pinpoint precisely what pupils need to do next to raise their attainment. The advice given to pupils about how to improve is often too general, leaving pupils confused about what to do next.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's leaders have done too little to build upon the satisfactory outcomes and provision reported at the last inspection. The headteacher has worked tenaciously to eliminate areas of ineffective teaching and has not shirked from taking difficult decisions. However, she and other leaders have not communicated high expectations persuasively enough to staff to ensure that all have a shared sense of direction and feel part of a successful team. Self-evaluation procedures are not rigorous enough in teasing out why some pupils do better than others. In particular, the school has an over-inflated view of the quality of teaching and learning and has not sufficiently recognised that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are still too low. The school has missed all of its challenging targets over the past two years. Leaders have not ensured pupils make progress commensurate with their abilities and starting points.

Senior managers and the governing body do not evaluate robustly enough the implementation and effectiveness of whole-school strategies to bring about improvements. The promotion of equality of opportunity for all pupils is inadequate because too many are not making enough progress and attainment remains too low.

The governing body recognises that, although it has been supportive of the school, it

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has not held leaders to account for the pupils' low attainment and inadequate progress. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory, although inspectors identified some important issues regarding site security. The headteacher and governing body recognised these risks, and by the time inspectors left the school, work was in hand to rectify them. The school's work in developing pupils' understanding of the lives, beliefs and values of people from different ethnic groups and cultures is satisfactory and the school is starting to evaluate the impact of its work in this area.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire are happy with most aspects of the school and most report that their children enjoy school. However, a few voiced concerns about the leadership and management of the school and about one third raised concerns about inappropriate behaviour in classes. These concerns were followed up and inspectors found that while behaviour has improved over the last year, there are still isolated instances where learning is interrupted by inappropriate behaviour. Inspectors endorse the view of those parents who feel their children are not making sufficient progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Balksbury Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 102 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 283 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	42	55	54	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	34	66	65	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	29	64	63	8	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	22	61	60	16	16	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	24	24	67	66	8	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	23	61	60	16	16	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	25	70	69	6	6	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	28	27	64	63	5	5	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	21	66	65	8	8	3	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	14	57	56	20	20	9	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	17	65	64	11	11	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	15	15	63	62	9	9	10	10
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	25	62	61	10	10	2	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



8 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Balksbury Junior School, Andover SP10 3QP

Thank you for being so polite and friendly when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our visit and the opportunity to talk to some of you, and to see you in lessons and at play. Although there are some positive things about your school, you are not getting a good enough education. Your school has been put into 'special measures' because it needs extra help to make it better. Inspectors will visit the school regularly to check how well it is improving.

Most of you enjoy school, feel safe and secure and your behaviour is satisfactory. You have good relationships with your teachers but you do not make enough progress in your learning because the teaching does not challenge you enough. The standards of attainment that you reach by the end of Year 6 are lower than in most other schools. The people who lead the school are not doing enough to make it better.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and the governing body to do the following:

- increase the progress that you make and make sure that none of you falls behind
- make sure that teachers plan interesting lessons for you with work that is not too easy or too hard, but just right
- improve the way adults check up on how well you are learning so that they can keep making the right improvements
- make sure the governing body plays a bigger part in helping the school get better.

You can help by always doing your best in lessons, behaving well and attending regularly. We wish you all success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant

Lead inspector

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