

# Bligh Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118470
<b>Local Authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	339224
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 February 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Kevin Hodge

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	263
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sharon Alimo
<b>Headteacher</b>	Robin Kingman
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 February 2010
<b>School address</b>	Bligh Way Rochester ME2 2XJ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors spent more than three quarters of the time looking at pupils' learning, observed 12 lessons, saw nine teachers and held meetings with groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's daily routines including playtimes and lunchtimes, and looked at work in pupils' books, monitoring records and tracking information, showing pupils' attainment and the progress they are making. The school's improvement plans, and the 106 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents and carers along with pupil questionnaires were analysed.

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

- How pupils, particularly the more able, achieve in their writing and mathematics.
- How senior leaders use self-evaluation routines to promote improvement, particularly in aspects such as teaching. How governors act as critical friends to ensure the school's continued capacity to improve and help raise its effectiveness.

## Information about the school

Bligh Junior is slightly smaller than most junior schools. Since the last inspection there was a significant fall in pupil numbers which resulted in the redundancy of two teaching and four support staff. The number of classes has been reduced by two and some class sizes have increased since the last inspection. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Their needs include behavioural, emotional, academic and physical. There is a daily breakfast club which is managed by the governors. It has a number of awards reflecting its contribution to developing pupils' healthy lifestyles and international awareness.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Bligh Junior School provides a satisfactory standard of education. There have been some improvements since the last inspection, but key aspects still need to improve further if the school's desire to be even better becomes a reality. National test results rose in 2009, but despite this success, pupils' attainment remains broadly average and most pupils make satisfactory progress as they did at the last inspection. In mathematics, pupils' accurate number skills are not used often enough to solve extended investigations, particularly for the most able. Pupils' writing skills have improved due to initiatives such as making 'every child a writer'.

Pupils spoke well of the school in discussion with inspectors, and despite some parents' concerns, they behave well. Teaching is typically satisfactory, rather than good. This is because too many lessons lack the sparkle to really involve and motivate pupils' interests, stretch the most able or to ensure that pupils' use their basic skills in a wide range of subjects. The school makes good provision for pupils' care and guidance. Initiatives such as the daily Oasis club help those who feel they need some 'time out'. Pupils say they feel safe; some classmates, who are mediators, help playtimes run smoothly and a good mixture of support ensures that those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. To broaden the pupils' horizons beyond the school gates, there are good opportunities to learn about others from other countries and with a school in Scotland. The school promotes pupils' healthy lifestyles well. Good activity levels in both playgrounds, with pupils often inventing their own games, help them keep fit.

A significant fall in pupil numbers has caused difficulties and disruption, with a reduction in the number of classes, staff redundancies and some increase in class sizes. The headteacher, supported by governors, has managed these complex changes effectively. However, the hard truth is that these changes have diverted the focus away from other key aspects needing quicker improvement such as increasing pupils' progress, promoting higher quality teaching or updating policies.

Although the school has satisfactory capacity to improve, self-evaluation routines do not draw upon rigorous monitoring routines to guide priorities or keep a close check on the pace of the school's improvements. Governors support the senior leaders conscientiously, but recognise that more needs to be done to move the school forward more quickly.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' mathematical abilities by:

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- ensuring they have more open-ended investigative activities
- planning more mathematically based special days or activities to raise pupils' interest in the subject.
- Raise the quality and consistency of teaching this academic year by:
  - involving pupils more in their learning during lessons, particularly the most able
  - ensuring pupils use their skills within different subjects
  - making sure activities planned really inspire pupils to learn.
- Improve the pace of improvement this academic year by:
  - involving staff and governors more in self-evaluation and monitoring to determine what works well and what needs improving more quickly
  - reviewing the school's teaching and learning policy to reflect a creative approach to learning.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

Pupils' attainment in their academic work is broadly average. Although they behave well and enjoy school, their steady rather than quick pace of learning over time results in them making satisfactory progress. Pupils' respond well by carrying out tasks set. However, they are sometimes too passive, because the teaching does not demand enough of them or involve them sufficiently in the learning process. When given the opportunity, pupils respond enthusiastically to practical and motivating activities. In a Year 3 lesson for example, pupils really enjoyed devising 'boneyard raps' to extend their writing ability. In a Year 6 English lesson, pupils enjoyed learning about how to write a biography of a famous person. Pupils' scientific skills and information and communication technology skills develop steadily and they reach the expected levels. Their artistic talents, recognised by some pupils winning an art competition recently, are good.

Pupils like being involved in shaping the school's direction. The school council takes its role seriously and likes seeking the views of classmates to help improve what goes on. The tuck shop, run by pupils at break times, is a popular choice for mid-morning healthy snacks. The school has been involved in a number of events in the community such as planting trees and influencing the refurbishment of a local landmark. The very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their classmates as they are well supported and integrate with others happily. The school's promotion of pupils' basic skills, their understanding of others from differing backgrounds and cooperative attitudes, prepares them appropriately for their next stage of education and in later life.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<sup>1</sup> 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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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

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

**How effective is the provision?**

A curriculum that combines different subjects and aspects into areas of learning is beginning to take shape. However, current plans do not provide enough exciting and relevant activities that teachers can readily adapt into lively and motivating lessons. The teaching of key skills is not planned well enough to cover different areas. In addition, subjects such as mathematics have too few special problem solving or investigation days or activities to fire pupils' imagination. Teachers often plan activities that demand too little in terms of the pupils' thinking or pace of learning, particularly for the most able. Pupils complete tasks with a sense of accomplishment, but this tends to be because the task is finished rather than because of learning a new idea, skill or by suggesting a different approach. Pupils are well managed. Group work is set at different levels in well-taught activities and good use of audio-visual whiteboards helps with explanations. In some lessons, pupils' attention wanders as teachers' introductions or explanations are overly long, preventing pupils getting down to work quickly.

Teachers mark work regularly and include helpful comments to guide pupils in how to improve their work. The curriculum is extended by the addition of a number of activities ranging from sports clubs to gardening. Vulnerable pupils and those with specific disabilities are supported well as the school ensures that their needs are identified quickly and because of the good curriculum support provided in class and in small one-to-one groups. Parents' and carers' perceptions that the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has declined because of a reduction in staffing are understandable. This is recognised by the school. However, within the resources available, the needs of this group of pupils are skilfully met. The daily

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breakfast club is a valuable extra and the pupils' view that the 'breakfast is great' reflects its popularity.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher, supported by governors, has guided the school through a period of change with some skill. However, the drive and ambition to improve it more quickly and in developing the school's capacity to improve have come second to dealing with the consequences of the fall in pupil numbers. Clearer plans for action have improved aspects such as pupils' writing and the school's provision for community cohesion. The international school status awarded recently recognises the good links developed with schools in Mumbai, France, Nigeria, Pakistan and Scotland. These help develop pupils' sense of place in the wider world, understanding of others' beliefs and backgrounds, while learning about their locality effectively.

The performance of different groups of pupils is analysed better so that those falling behind are picked up quickly. This ensures that pupils achieve at least satisfactorily, with a minority demonstrating good achievement. Changes in staff responsibilities and roles have meant that not all are involved effectively enough in the school's self-evaluation, particularly in aspects such as monitoring teaching or reviewing policies such as teaching and learning.

Governors support the school conscientiously, particularly in ensuring that safeguarding procedures and checks on staffing and helpers are followed effectively. Governors visit the school to see what goes on and offer support, but their role as critical friends has not always been effective enough in promoting a quicker pace to improvement since the last inspection. The school makes sure that pupils have equal access to activities by keeping a careful check which pupils attending which activities for example. Pupils have equal opportunities to be involved in activities beyond school. Staff are alert to any possible form of discrimination and it is not tolerated should it occur.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The parents and carers who responded with comments on the questionnaires roughly fell into two groups: those that thought the school was doing a good job and those with reservations about some aspects of the school's work. The concerns tended to cover pupils' behaviour, possible bullying and the apparent decline in support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In the light of these concerns the inspection team spent extra time looking at pupils' behaviour, listening to the pupils first-hand views and observing the support provided for pupils with learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties. The inspection team did not observe any instances of poor behaviour, the pupils said that bullying was handled effectively and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities were supported effectively, despite reductions in staffing.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team received 109 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 202 pupils registered at the school.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bligh 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.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	40	61	56	4	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	39	36	64	58	2	2	2	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	41	38	56	50	11	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	41	46	41	12	11	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	47	43	54	48	5	5	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	38	51	45	11	10	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	27	71	65	7	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)	41	38	52	46	5	5	4	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	28	65	59	9	8	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	23	54	49	17	16	8	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	23	52	49	17	16	8	7
The school is led and managed effectively	17	16	65	59	17	16	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	25	63	57	14	13	1	1

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



12 February 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Bligh Junior School, Rochester, ME2 2XJ

I am writing to let you know about the findings from the inspection we carried out recently. The large majority of your parents and carers like what goes on, but some would like it to be even better. We think yours is a satisfactory school that can improve.

Here are some of the things we found out:

- Most of you try hard and make satisfactory progress. Some of you, such as those capable of doing harder work, could do a bit better at times.
- You reach average levels in your academic work, but your skills in working out more advanced investigations in maths need improving.
- Your behaviour is good, but your parents and carers think it could be even better.
- You are good at keeping active at playtimes and in your after-school clubs.
- The range of things you get to do is typical of many schools, but your work in the community, such as planting trees, is good.
- Your Oasis club, peer mediators and school council help to make the school run smoothly, particularly for those of you who need extra help.
- The teaching is sometimes good, but the teachers need to stretch your thinking more and involve you actively in your learning.
- The school helps you learn about others in far away countries and your link with a Scottish school is good. Better brush up your Gaelic!

We have asked the school to do three things to help it improve further:

- Give you more open-ended investigative skills in your maths work.
- Help staff find more ways of ensuring you learn better and faster in your lessons, particularly by planning more exciting activities to do.
- For the senior staff and governors to look really closely at what is going on in school and how well you work so they can improve the school quickly to the better levels they want.

You can help by trying your best in all lessons and continuing to behave well.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge

Lead inspector

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