

# King's Ford Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114716
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	326057
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Roderick Passant

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 (total)	117
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Gordon Leathers
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 September 2005
<b>School address</b>	Gloucester Avenue Shrub End Colchester Essex CO2 9AZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01206 573807
<b>Fax number</b>	01206 540195

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

### Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. Most pupils are White British with a small number from seven minority ethnic backgrounds, a few of whom are learning English as an additional language. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school at varying points of the school year is high because up to a third have parents who are in the Armed Forces. A high proportion of these have parents on active service or returning from duty. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The proportion who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high, as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. There is a small number of pupils in the care of the local authority.

Attainment on entry is currently broadly average but it has varied significantly in some years when it has often been well below average. The school operates family learning projects. A local authority multi-agency team is based at the school. The school has been recognised nationally as a Healthy School and gained awards for its work in Basic skills, international links, the arts and environmental issues.

### 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 provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has just emerged from an unsettled period in which there have been major changes in leadership and a high number of staff changes. This has disrupted the school's progress, requiring some aspects of the school's provision to be re-developed.

The school is a caring community. Relationships between pupils and adults are excellent. Staff are not only vigilant to pupils' individual needs but also provide dependable, consistent warmth, which provides pupils with a high degree of security. Moral and social development is good so that pupils generally get on well together and often show kindness and support to each other. They have a mature appreciation of each others difficulties. Behaviour is good because staff manage this in a positive manner through praise. Pupils feel safe in school and enjoy learning. They have a good understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle.

A rich curriculum provides wide-ranging opportunities for pupils to gain a sense of achievement and it effectively supports pupils' good personal development. There is a good range of strategies to support pupils who find learning difficult. Information and communication technology (ICT) is a strong feature of the school and pupils are accomplished users. In contrast, there is not an obvious book culture with the library as a natural focus. Appropriate systems are in place to ensure child protection and pupils' health and safety. There are excellent links with other agencies, both formal and informal, to support pupils and their families and strong systems in place to encourage good attendance. The headteacher views the partnership with parents as essential and the school is contributing to community cohesion by being a focus within the community in order to develop this partnership. The school works hard to support pupils who are experiencing difficulties. It is particularly sensitive to the fact that, until very recently, some parents were on active front line deployment in Afghanistan with the associated anxieties and impact on learning this caused pupils.

The unvalidated test results for Year 6 in 2008 show that standards are likely to be below the national average, particularly in mathematics. Currently, achievement is satisfactory with a clear trend of improvement in standards and progress. The quality of learning and teaching is satisfactory but a key factor in slowing learning is that pupils find formal language difficult to interpret and write. The school monitors pupils' progress carefully through periodic half-termly assessment, using this information to target additional support to those who need it. As a result, pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because of the quality of support that they receive. Pupils at an early stage of learning English also make good progress. Teachers manage the mixed-age classes well. Marking is diligent, supportive and often points towards improvement but is not sufficiently specific in telling pupils where they are and what they need to do to improve. Pupils are not always clear about their targets.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher leads the school well and has steered it effectively through a difficult transitional period. He has created strong teamwork amongst all staff and a shared commitment to pupils' education. Governance is satisfactory and self-evaluation is accurate. The school has a clear view of itself based upon accurate assessments of teaching and learning and an awareness of teachers' strengths. It is developing the role of the senior leadership team and raising standards with the help of the local authority. Given the progress now being seen, the school has sound capacity for continued improvement.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by developing pupils' confidence in reading and using formal language, and extending their vocabulary.
- Develop a strong book culture in the school and develop the library to become a focus for this.
- Ensure that feedback to pupils is specific and gives clear indications of where they are and what they need to do in order to move on in their work, and that they have ownership of these targets.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Pupils make suitable progress in relation to their starting points and achieve satisfactorily by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. The drop in standards in the national tests for 2007 to well below average coincided with major changes in staffing, the ripples of which carried over into the subsequent academic year. The unvalidated results in 2008 were below average for English and science but particularly disappointing for the school in mathematics where they were well below average. Pupils find understanding and writing formal language difficult, and they struggle with the language of tests and examinations. They answer questions with limited vocabulary, which restricts their chances of achieving higher levels.

There is now a clear upward trend in progress and pupils with learning difficulties are doing particularly well given their low starting points. The school's own assessment and tracking data shows that the high number of pupils joining or leaving at various points of their school career and the significant proportion of pupils who need extra help are currently making better progress than previously. This is mainly due to the good use of specialist teaching and external agencies to guide pupils. The impact of the school's leadership in fostering good achievement is much more apparent when considering the more recent progress made by individual pupils.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe, secure and valued. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school has a small number of pupils whose behaviour can be extremely challenging but it is effective in helping them to manage this. It takes a strong stance on anti-bullying and pupils feel they can bring any concerns to the attention of a member of staff, confident that these will be dealt with effectively. The school works hard to foster pupils' academic confidence, combat low self-esteem and broaden their horizons. They gain a sense of the wider world through its developing international work. Pupils have a good understanding of how to look after themselves and they make a good contribution to the community, taking seriously their various roles and responsibilities within the school. Pupils show good enjoyment of school and learning. Overall attendance is satisfactory, although it is below the national average this term. Currently, authorised absence is high because of compassionate reasons linked to parents return home from active service overseas. Pupils' personal development, social skills, sense of responsibility and skills in ICT mean that they are prepared suitably for the next steps in their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of learning and teaching is generally satisfactory, although the teaching seen was good during the inspection enabling pupils to make good progress in some lessons. Relationships are often excellent between teachers and their pupils, and behaviour management is skilled. Teachers anticipate when a quick word is needed to bring pupils back on task and they are adept at using apt praise to foster pupils' confidence. They plan well for the mixed age classes, targeting work effectively for the range of abilities. There is close and effective teamwork with teaching assistants, who provide good support to individuals and groups. Questioning is often skilled, encouraging pupils to think and develop their independence as learners. Marking is satisfactory. It is encouraging and often indicates what to improve. However, it is insufficiently specific, and does not give clear indications of what pupils need to do to move to the next stage.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school has a clear philosophy about the curriculum and its role in broadening pupils' horizons, raising aspirations and promoting success. Hence, there is a strong focus on enrichment through trips, clubs, visitors and special themed events. These activities foster pupils' enjoyment of school, develop their positive attitudes, by providing interesting contexts for learning, and act effectively as a spur to their improving achievement. The school is carefully developing links between subjects to provide further opportunities for reinforcing basic skills. It has made very significant investment in ICT to develop pupils' skills across the curriculum and this is being used effectively in the school's developing international work. Work on the 'Aim Higher' programme is helping to raise pupils' academic aspirations. The school has provided pupils with notebook computers to give good support for home learning. Whilst within classes, pupils are exploring books and stories in depth, this work does not have a high profile around the school. There is not an obvious book culture of reading for pleasure with the school library as a focal point.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school provides good care, guidance and support for its pupils who all respond particularly well to one-to-one contact with adults. Support staff play an invaluable role within the school, particularly important during the recent period of major staff changes, because they provide a core of stability and continuity of relationships and because they are very much the 'eyes and ears' of the school. Adults give good support to pupils who find learning difficult to help them make good progress. The school tracks all pupils' progress well, analysing carefully the performance of particular groups of pupils through detailed periodic assessments. This enables the senior leaders to review pupils' progress regularly with teachers and target specific support to individuals. However, the feedback given to pupils is not always explicit about where pupils are and what they need to do next. This means that pupils are not clear about their targets and teachers do not have precise enough information to help them between the periodic assessments.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The headteacher is committed to developing links with parents, seeing their support for children's learning as essential. He is increasing the school's good links with the local area to ensure even greater community cohesion by making the school a focal point for a range of activities. For example, family learning courses and summer holiday trips, which have good parental take-up, encourage parents to visit the school and support their children's learning. Now that staffing is stable, the school is developing its senior leadership team to a satisfactory level and providing further staff training to increase teachers' skills. The school is currently working closely with the local authority and its consultants to focus on raising standards and accelerate pupils' progress. The school is very inclusive and supports pupils' wide-ranging needs effectively under the careful guidance of the deputy headteacher, who acts as the inclusion manager. Governance is satisfactory. Although the chair of governors is relatively new in post, he has a clear grasp of what needs to be done to make the governing body more effective; for example, not only supporting the headteacher but also challenging the school leadership based on an accurate understanding of the school.

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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?	1
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/or disabilities make progress	2

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<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	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3
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?	2

## 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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

15 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of King's Ford Junior School, Colchester, C02 9AZ

I very much enjoyed my stay in your school. Thank you for making me so welcome. My thanks go to those pupils who gave up part of their lunchtime to see me. I appreciate it meant you had to rush your lunch.

The school is helping you develop well as young people. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. You clearly enjoy school and have good attitudes towards learning. It is good to know that the school encourages you to tell an adult or use the bully-box if you are worried or upset. It is a friendly school, where you do 'All Work Together'. You are supportive and often show kindness to each other. You are also very grown up in the way that you appreciate that some children have difficulties. Standards are below those found in many schools but you make steady progress. There are clear signs that progress is improving because of your efforts. Well done! Year 6 are working hard and are on track to achieve well. One thing getting in the way of your learning is that you find formal language difficult. I have asked Mr Leathers to work with staff to find plenty of opportunities for you to give presentations to class and assembly so that you get more confident in speaking in a formal way. As part of this, I also asked him to help you develop your vocabulary to help you in your writing. The second thing I have asked Mr Leathers to do is to encourage you in reading for pleasure. The final thing I have asked him to do is to ensure that when teachers give you feedback you have a very clear idea how to improve your work so that you are sure of your targets.

Staff work together well and are very committed to ensuring that you do the best you can. They keep a careful eye on your progress and provide good help to those who need it. In the lessons I saw, you made good progress. Teachers work hard to make sure that you learn interesting things in a fun but effective way. Mr Leathers leads the school well. He and the staff will no doubt be doing many things to help improve the school even more. With your continued help, they will be able to do this all the faster.

Sincere good wishes for your future school careers.

Roderick Passant

Lead inspector