

# Balliol Lower School

## Inspection report

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|                                |                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 109464          |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Bedford         |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 395585          |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 4–5 July 2012   |
| <b>Lead inspector</b>          | Philip Mann HMI |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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|--|---|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary   |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community                                       |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3–9   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed   |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 285   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                              |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Christine Clifford                              |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Kylie Storey                                    |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 1 October 2008                                  |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Balliol Road<br>Kempston<br>Bedford<br>MK42 7ER |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01234 300601                                    |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 01234 300602                                    |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | balliol@deal.bedfordshire.gov.uk                |

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|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Registered childcare provision</b>                                   | EY321417                                |
| <b>Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision</b> | Balliol Breakfast and After-school Club |
| <b>Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision</b>        | Not applicable                          |

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|                           |               |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Age group</b>          | 3–9           |
| <b>Inspection date(s)</b> | 4–5 July 2012 |
| <b>Inspection number</b>  | 395585        |



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Philip Mann

Her Majesty's Inspector

Wayne Cooper

Additional Inspector

Allison Dawes

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors took account of any responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed 12 teachers teaching a total of 17 lessons, of which four were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspection team made short visits to other lessons to look at pupils' work and to review the teaching of phonics (sounds needed to read), literacy and numeracy skills. They also listened to pupils of lower ability in Year 2 read. Meetings were held with members of the school council, senior staff, middle managers, subject leaders and members of the governing body. Several discussions took place between inspectors and parents and carers before school.

Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents including those related to school improvement, school self-evaluation, the monitoring of teaching, safeguarding and minutes of the governing body. They also analysed 76 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and others completed by staff and pupils. A review of the extended school's provision was completed during this inspection.

## Information about the school

This is an average-sized lower school that serves an area of mixed housing on the outskirts of Bedford. Just over a half the pupils are of White British background. The proportion from minority ethnic groups is well above average and an above average number speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above the national average, as is the number of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. The number of pupils who leave or join the school at other than the usual times is greater than that found nationally. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal is well above average. The school holds several accreditations including the Silver Eco Award and the International Award.

Additional childcare provision is made for children between the ages of three and nine years in the breakfast and after-school club, which is managed by the school. There is also an established pre-school and a children's centre on site: these are both run privately and not part of this inspection.

**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

|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>          | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Achievement of pupils</b>          | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Quality of teaching</b>            | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b> | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>      | <b>2</b> |

## Key findings

- This is a good school that has created an inclusive, positive caring climate for learning where each pupil is treated as an individual. Comments such as, 'Balliol Lower is a brilliant school where all the staff make the children and parents feel very welcome and part of it' reflect the views of many parents and carers. However, the school is not outstanding yet because teaching is not yet ensuring that all pupils make consistently outstanding gains in their learning in lessons over time.
- Achievement is good. All pupils, including those children in the Nursery and Reception classes, make good progress from low starting points because of predominantly good teaching. They attain standards that are just above national expectations by the end of Year 4 in English and mathematics. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those who sometimes exhibit challenging behaviour respond very positively to excellent levels of individualised care. Their achievement in basic skills is equally good.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school overall is good. Provision supports good achievement in lessons and pupils display positive attitudes towards learning. Discussions with pupils and a review of survey results confirm that they feel safe in school.
- Good teaching exists in many classes and in some it is outstanding where the pace of learning is brisk and expectations are very high. However, in the few satisfactory lessons observed, teachers do not make best use of questions and information and communication technology (ICT) to support their teaching and accelerate pupils' achievement. While verbal and written feedback is regular, inconsistencies in the quality of marking means that pupils are not always sure about what they need to do next to improve.
- Leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher has created a dedicated staff team whose members aspire to drive forward further

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school improvement for the benefit of both the school and local community. Teaching is managed well. Performance management is effective and linked closely to school improvement. Curriculum provision is good and the promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a significant strength.

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

- Accelerate rates of pupils' achievement further by ensuring that:
  - all teaching is consistently good or better
  - marking and feedback fully inform pupils about what they need to do next to improve
  - teachers make more effective use of ICT to engage pupils in their learning.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Good teaching across the school ensures that all pupils achieve well in both their academic and personal development. This is a view expressed by many parents and carers and reflected in the comments of one who wrote, 'I believe that Balliol is an exceptionally good school that caters for the needs of my children very well.' Children enter the Nursery at levels well below those expected nationally for their age. Good provision ensures children make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage in all areas of learning in readiness to start in Year 1 at levels below those expected. An extensive range of purposeful activity indoors provides a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. For example, these include acting out little scenarios in the role play area or engaging in an animated number game on the computer. These children actively participate in physical activity within the outdoor areas. They develop their physical, social and personal skills well by playing with others. However, opportunities for the development in other areas of learning in the outdoor area are less well developed.

Good progress overall is maintained across the school and by the time pupils leave Year 4, their attainment in English and mathematics is just above national expected levels. This is especially so in reading and mathematics where just under a half of these pupils attained Level 4 in the latest optional national tests. Attainment in writing is not as high but at nationally expected levels for this age group. The school is successful at narrowing gaps in attainment, and analysis of data confirms that there are no significant differences in achievement between any group of pupils. This includes those eligible for free school meals, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who receive carefully targeted provision. The needs of those pupils who speak English as an additional language are picked up very quickly as a result of good leadership. Consequently, these pupils make at least good progress. The achievement of the more-able pupils is good over time but sometimes there is a lack of specific tasks for these pupils in some lessons. Achievement in phonics is

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good overall and this effectively supports the development of reading and early literacy skills. As a result, attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 is above average.

The organisation of pupils in Key Stage 2 into ability groupings for mathematics provides good levels of challenge for all pupils at their own level. A strong emphasis is placed on practical mathematical experiences through investigation and problem solving linked to a whole school theme such as the Olympics. Pupils in all ability groups demonstrate a thirst for learning in mathematics as a result. For example, those working in the upper ability group applied their knowledge of geometry to accurately enlarge the Olympic logo by a factor of four. Those in the lower ability group were able to learn about and use simple decimal fractions by calculating the difference in time between their own race time gathered in a physical education lesson with the world record for 100 metres.

### **Quality of teaching**

Teaching is mainly good with some outstanding teaching observed across the school. However, a small proportion of satisfactory teaching is evident in both Key Stages 1 and 2. Comments such as, 'I remain impressed with the standards of teaching and nurturing provided' fully exemplify the views of many parents about the standard of teaching within the school.

Detailed lesson planning that identifies clear learning intentions is a consistent feature of teaching in all classes. Where teaching was judged to be good or outstanding, lessons were brisk and teachers made very good use of questions to extend pupils' learning further. This is especially so in mathematics lessons as a result of recent staff development and training. All teachers make effective use of teaching assistants to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including with specific behavioural and academic needs. Teaching assistants play a key role in the effective teaching of the sounds that pupils need to know to help them read. Literacy is taught well and teachers make effective reference to subject specific vocabulary in lessons to support their teaching and engage all pupils who speak English as an additional language effectively in the learning process.

Imaginative planning that make clear links between subjects promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Resources and ICT are used well overall in most lessons to support teaching and engage pupils in learning. This is especially so for older pupils in Key Stage 2, as seen when pupils in Year 4 worked in pairs with enthusiasm to add a commentary to a slide presentation of their recent school trip. However, in the few lessons when teaching was judged to be satisfactory, the teachers made insufficient use of resources and ICT to support their teaching and engage pupils in the learning process.

Assessment is satisfactory overall and teachers monitor the progress of individual pupils regularly. However, some teachers make insufficient use of time at the end of lessons to support the assessment of learning through review and discussion with

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the pupils. Although pupils work in literacy and mathematics is marked appropriately, insufficient guidance is given to pupils about what they need to do next to improve linked to specific targets.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour in class during the inspection and over time is good overall and provides the foundation for good learning. Some pupils, parents and carers say that a small number of pupils find it difficult to behave well, and this is borne out by a few exclusions this year. However, they say that any issues are tackled quickly and with sensitivity to ensure minimum disruption to learning for other pupils. Inspectors agree with them and noted that potentially disruptive behaviour is handled with sensitivity so that effective learning is maintained for the vast majority of pupils. Staff use a wide range of behaviour management strategies effectively to ensure that challenging behaviour from a few pupils does not restrict others' learning. Those pupils who occasionally display very challenging behaviour are given one-to-one support of high quality. These pupils respond well to this high quality support and care. One parent wrote, 'Children are valued and respected as individuals and unsatisfactory behaviour is dealt with quickly and with minimal disruption to other pupils.' Pupils actively participate in practical learning activities and this is especially so in mathematics lessons. All teachers develop positive relationships with the pupils within a very inclusive atmosphere for learning. Pupils feel very safe in school. They are very aware of issues related to different forms of bullying. They say that when bullying occasionally happens, it is always sorted out. One older pupil said, 'Everyone cares a lot about it here.'

Attendance has improved to average levels this year because of the relentless approach by staff in tackling persistent absence. This has been achieved, for instance, by encouraging parents and carers to ensure their children attend school through phone calls and text reminders. Furthermore, good attendance and punctuality are encouraged through the school's 'Rainbow Rewards' scheme.

### **Leadership and management**

Leaders display purpose and ambition in tackling areas of weakness to improve the school further. The headteacher has instilled a sense of drive and teamwork amongst the staff, resulting in good improvement since the previous inspection. The school is very inclusive. Any discrimination is tackled with vigour and the promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Self-evaluation is very accurate, based on comprehensive monitoring of teaching and learning. Performance management is effective because it links the impact of teaching on the progress of pupils and good achievement. The effective delegation of responsibility has empowered curriculum and subject leaders in the process of self-evaluation and school improvement. This has strengthened the school's good capacity for further improvement.

School governance is good. The governing body demonstrates a very secure knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses based on

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frequent and comprehensive monitoring of the school's work. Safeguarding meets requirements and the school goes the extra mile to ensure all pupils are safe because risk assessments are regularly undertaken to ensure good levels of health and safety are maintained.

The curriculum is good, with effective cross-curricular links planned to provide a strong element of problem solving and investigation based on well-designed topic themes. This particularly enriches pupils' learning experiences and lines of enquiry in mathematics. There are good examples of pupils writing across the curriculum such as that seen in the Second World War literacy work. For example, one Year 4 pupil wrote as a soldier in a wartime diary, 'Before I jumped out of the plane I was thinking about my family. I was so scared I thought I was going to die.' Dancing and swimming are strong features within the curriculum. A variety of visits, clubs and activities outside of lessons provide further levels of enrichment. The promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a significant strength with good evidence of multicultural and international activity such as visits to other places of worships and links with schools abroad. Moral development is very good and supported through very clear links with the school's own values and positive behaviour policy.

Strong links exist with the adjacent children's centre to effectively manage the before- and after-school clubs on behalf of the governing body. Provision is good. These extended school activities provide a safe, orderly well-managed facility for parents and carers within a well-resourced children's centre. These judgements are fully reflected by comments from parents such as, 'The breakfast and after-school club facilities are excellent, and all children are well cared for.'



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

| Grade   | Judgement    | Description  |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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      | 54  | 42   | 2            | 2          |
| Primary schools      | 14  | 49   | 32           | 6          |
| Secondary schools    | 20  | 39   | 34           | 7          |
| Special schools      | 33  | 45   | 20           | 3          |
| Pupil referral units | 9   | 55   | 28           | 8          |
| All schools          | 16  | 47   | 31           | 6          |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement:               | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.   |
| Attainment:                | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.  |
| Attendance:                | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.   |
| Behaviour:                 | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.   |
| Capacity to improve:       | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.                    |
| Floor standards:           | the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.  |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:     | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.  |
| 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. |
| Safety:                    | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.             |

**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.**



6 July 2012

Dear Children

### **Inspection of Balliol Lower School, Bedford MK42 7ER**

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you all for making us feel so welcome. We really enjoyed visiting your school and were impressed with your good behaviour, positive approach to lessons and how everyone really feels included in everything the school does.

Many of your parents and carers told us how much you enjoy being at school and how good it is. We agree with them because you go to a good school. This is because your headteacher and the governors lead the school well and all the staff work hard as a team to make sure that you are very well looked after and helped to succeed. You all are making good progress in many things. This is because the teachers have worked hard to improve your skills in reading, writing and numeracy. We were particularly impressed with how the staff care for those of you who find it more difficult to concentrate and behave well to ensure everybody gets a chance to succeed.

The teachers plan many interesting things for you to do and their good teaching means that you all achieve well in lessons. In some lessons, you make very quick progress because the teaching is outstanding. Sometimes, other lessons are not as good because these teachers do not make enough use of computers and other activities to help you with your learning. The teachers generally mark your work well and keep a detailed record of how well you are doing in lessons. However, there are times when this marking could tell you more about how you could do better. These are things the teachers are going to work at to make sure you all make even better progress.

You can play your part by always behaving well and trying your best in all that you do at school. I wish you all the very best for the future,

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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