

# Balfour Junior School

Balfour Road, Chatham, Kent, ME4 6QX

**Inspection dates** 23–24 September 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Progress has not been consistently strong across the school, particularly in mathematics.
- Teaching is not always pitched at the right level for pupils and as a result the proportion of pupils making the progress of which they are capable is variable across subjects.
- Some teachers do not check on pupils' progress regularly enough during lessons so that the pace of learning dips particularly for the more able.
- The pace of change has been restricted by major changes in staffing; however, the school is now improving. Marking does not make it clear to pupils what they have learnt and what they should focus on next.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, including governors, want the school to improve and are ambitious for all pupils to fulfil their potential and have equal opportunities to succeed.
- A large majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View agree that the school is well led and managed.
- The headteacher has a very clear understanding of what the school needs to do to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement and how to achieve this.
- Pupils are very caring towards each other and to all adults. They behave very respectfully.
- Parents, carers, pupils and staff agree that the school is a safe place.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes. They visited 23 lessons of which two were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and assemblies and listened to pupils read.
- They held meetings with leaders and managers, staff and pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met formally and also informally with parents and carers at the beginning of the school day and took account of the 64 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- They observed the school’s work and looked closely at a number of documents, including the school’s information about pupils’ progress, the school’s checks on its own effectiveness, planning and monitoring documentation, local authority reports, records of how the school uses its funding especially how the money from pupil premium is spent, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and safeguarding documents.
- The inspectors analysed 47 questionnaires from staff.

## Inspection team

Gay Whent, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Jude

Additional Inspector

Jill Thewlis

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Balfour Junior School is larger than the average-sized junior school.
- The school has had a significant period of change in leadership and staffing. The headteacher commenced her post in September 2011. Many staff are new to the school. The new leadership team includes the four year leaders whose appointments began in September 2013.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average. These pupils have a variety of barriers to learning, including speech, language and communication needs.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (extra government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by local authorities and children of service families) is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average. Of these, the proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is above average. At the time of the inspection over 20 groups are represented in the school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and accelerate rates of progress so that more pupils meet or exceed expected levels, particularly in mathematics, by making sure that all teachers:
  - always pitch work more precisely to the learning needs of all pupils, including greater challenge for more-able pupils, providing opportunities for them to use and apply their skills
  - apply the school's marking policy consistently and plan for pupils to have enough time to respond to teachers' comments in their books so that they know how to improve their work
  - set clear 'next steps' for learning for each pupil, closely matched to their needs and abilities so that they know what they are expected to achieve.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because progress has not been consistently strong across the school, particularly in mathematics. Pupils' mathematical skills have not been taught in the past with sufficient precision. The school has correctly identified this as an area for improvement and has invested in a range of strategies which have now been in place for two terms and are already showing successful outcomes.
- Lessons are well planned for middle ability and lower ability pupils; however, there is not always the same level of challenge for most-able mathematicians. They often complete their tasks quickly and lack the opportunity to build on their knowledge by using and applying their skills in real life situations.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is now improving at a faster rate than nationally, so that almost all pupils are making at least average progress and many are starting to exceed this.
- Pupils who benefit from the pupil premium are making good progress overall as their needs are accurately identified and a range of effective strategies has been put into place to improve their learning. All groups of pupils who benefit from the pupil premium reach similar levels of attainment to other pupils in the school in reading, writing and mathematics as measured by their average point scores at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Some disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have made good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics which is leading to higher attainment. This is as a result of the training opportunities given both to teachers and support staff, particularly in relation to setting pupils small, achievable targets to give them confidence and a sense of achievement.
- The achievement of pupils who speak English as an additional language is outstanding. Although there are many different languages spoken, the quality of the support and resources these pupils are given result in particularly high attainment, often from low starting points.
- Pupils are actively encouraged to take part in a wide range of sporting activities. The new primary school sport funding has already been utilised to advantage to enable all pupils to develop healthier lifestyles. Pupils enjoy a wide range of well-resourced physical activities and games including lunchtime and after-school clubs.
- Pupils enjoy reading and are keen to share their favourite authors from J K Rowling to Michael Morpurgo. More-able readers read fluently and confidently. Less-able readers say they too like reading; they use their knowledge of phonics well to help them read unfamiliar words.
- The vast majority of pupils have very positive attitudes to learning; they arrive at lessons very promptly, especially when they move from class to class, and quickly focus on their new learning activities.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good over time, although the new staff team is determined to succeed and teach well; the previous variability has resulted in pupils underachieving in the past.
- Where teachers do not have a clear understanding of pupils' abilities, some more able pupils do not make enough progress, particularly in mathematics, as the tasks they have been set are not challenging enough for them to move their learning forward at a greater pace.
- In some lessons, pupils do not have as many opportunities as possible to use and apply the skills they have learnt to real life situations. This prevents them from making the best progress possible.
- Whilst marking is conscientiously carried out, the marking policy is not yet fully embedded so the quality of feedback varies and the understanding of pupils of what they have learnt well and

what they need to do to move their learning on is inconsistent across the school. The school is in the process of developing opportunities for pupils to respond and improve their work.

- A large majority of teaching is now good or better as a result of the constant drive for improvement with support from senior leaders and high quality training in place. For example, in a science lesson focused on separating materials, where teaching was outstanding, questioning was used to prompt pupils' thinking. This provoked very lively group discussion so that pupils learnt from each other.
- Additional adults, known in school as teaching partners, have a key role to play. They are well trained and work well with teachers often taking responsibility for the learning of small groups. Appropriately targeted support and intervention are ensuring that most pupils' individual needs are now met well.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils are very friendly towards each other and to all adults. They like everything about the school, especially their teachers who they say are 'excellent'. Pupils look out for one another whatever they are doing and they make sure that no one is left out even if they are not their friend.
- They say that 'behaviour is always like this' and their parents, carers and staff agree.
- The school's new curriculum has been created so that it is rich and interesting and is a success with pupils. In one lesson, as a result of the imaginative use of resources including vivid film footage, pupils of all abilities were fully engaged in writing an account of the role of a soldier in the First World War
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe. For example, the curriculum is used to promote e-safety through teaching pupils how to stay safe when using the internet both at school and at home.
- Pupils unanimously agree that there has hardly ever been an incident involving bullying. They know exactly what to do if there was and would go to any adult in the school either during the day or at lunchtime.
- Pupils behave sensibly at all times when moving around the school or at lunchtimes in the dining hall. At both playtime and lunchtime, pupils play well together. Fostering good relationships is an important focus for the school.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because where teachers do not always pitch their work precisely to pupils' learning needs some pupils lose their concentration and their attention waivers.
- Pupils enjoy school and their teachers; they want to learn so their attendance is above the national average.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The highly effective headteacher, her new leadership team and governors are working well together. They share a strong commitment to drive the school forward and raise pupils' achievement on their 'journey of improvement'. Every single member of staff has 'signed up' to the school's vision and all are extremely supportive.
- The school's self-evaluation is extremely accurate and is focused on improving the quality of teaching and increasing outcomes for pupils, particularly in mathematics. Leadership and management are not yet outstanding as the impact of the new leadership team has yet to show a positive impact on achievement over time.
- The way in which senior leaders check the quality of teaching is precise and thorough, always focusing on pupil outcomes. Professional development linked to pupils' learning needs is carefully planned so that it can be as effective as possible.

- The school demonstrates good capacity to improve. For example, as a result of the leaders' actions, a new system is in place so that pupils' progress across the school can be checked consistently, regularly and methodically by their teachers. This is already showing signs of an improved impact on pupils' learning.
  - Balfour is a fully inclusive school. All pupils are encouraged, all share similar opportunities. Leaders are determined to ensure that all pupils fulfil their potential and that there is no discrimination.
  - The local authority has provided appropriate support for the school's focus on improvement, particularly in relation to mathematics and the link with the Durham University learning project.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - The governing body is effective because it knows the school's strengths and weaknesses and it is focused on the aspects for improvement. Governors have a good grasp of performance management and encourage staff training. Pay is now linked to performance and standards are at the heart of this process. Governors are very much aware of the way in which the school's leadership has tackled weaker teaching. They understand how this has been directly linked to pupils' achievement and have a good understanding of how well pupils are doing. Governors ask challenging probing questions and as a result are clear about the school's current areas for improvement. Finance is carefully allocated and monitored, including specific sums such as pupil premium and sports funding. Governors meet safeguarding requirements well.
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## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118328
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	427258

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	479
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mark Jones
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kim Parnell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 September 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 843833
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