

Balfour Junior School

Balfour Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 6QX

Inspection dates 14–15 October 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a good school. Outcomes have risen quickly since the last inspection due to strong and effective leadership.
- Pupils make good progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards are now in line with the national averages in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved to good levels. Teachers and teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils of all abilities.
- Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong feature of the school. Pupils have a good understanding of different religions, cultures and British values.
- The headteacher and deputy provide excellent leadership for the school. They have an accurate view of the school’s performance and know precisely what needs to be done to move the school forward.
- Governance is good. Governors know the school well and provide constructive challenge.
- Pupils typically behave well. They feel very safe in school and attendance levels are above average. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibility.
- The care and welfare of pupils is central to the work of the school.
- Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are given quality guidance to help them make good progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attainment is not as high in writing as it is in reading and mathematics, particularly for the most-able pupils.
- Pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to improve their work.
- Leaders do not always ensure that highly effective practice is shared to enhance teaching further.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, especially in writing, by:
 - making sure that all pupils have sufficient opportunities to refine and improve written work
 - helping class teachers to challenge pupils, particularly the most able, to think at a deeper level.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels help staff to benefit from the highly effective work of others in the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, senior team and governing body work closely together in promoting their shared vision for the school. They have been effective in remedying the weaknesses identified at the school's last inspection and uniting the staff in support of their drive for improvement.
- Staff are very committed to improving the pupils' achievement. A typical comment from staff was: 'I am extremely happy to be part of this school. The motivation, enthusiasm and self-esteem promoted is amazing.'
- Leaders have led improvements in the quality of teaching well. Joint observations with school leaders showed that their judgements are accurate and the guidance they give to teachers focuses on ways in which they can improve their methods. Staff are clear about the link between salary progression and pupil progress. Leaders provide effective support and training for staff. Leaders at all levels have not, however, made sure that teachers can develop still further by sharing examples of highly effective practice in the school.
- Central to the school's caring approach is the importance of each pupil. One parent said: 'The school provides a high personal level of learning and care for each child.' All adults make increasingly accurate checks on pupils' progress and are helping to support each individual. Pupils flourish in an atmosphere of mutual respect and a safe and happy environment. Staff and pupils do not tolerate discrimination of any sort.
- Subject leaders are more focused on their responsibility for pupils' learning than they were at the time of the last inspection. They know exactly how well pupils are achieving and use this information to plan appropriate developments.
- The school uses its pupil premium funding effectively. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is monitored carefully and shows that, overall, the funding has a positive impact on pupils' rates of progress.
- The school uses the PE and sport premium for primary schools effectively. It successfully raises the awareness of, and opportunities for, pupils to take part in a wide range of sporting activities. The school provides a wide range of clubs, such as badminton, gymnastics and table tennis. Pupil participation is high and this helps promote healthy lifestyles for all.
- Leaders effectively use special educational needs funding to provide pupils with a range of support. For example, teaching assistants are highly trained to cater for the wide range of needs at the school. This helps pupils to make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders demonstrate a secure knowledge of curriculum development in line with the new national requirements. Subjects are well planned and enriched by visits, which are followed up by interesting learning opportunities through which pupils regularly practise reading, writing and mathematics. These opportunities have led to an improvement in pupils' progress.
- There is a strong emphasis on encouraging pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils appreciate and value diversity and respect the views and opinions of others. The school takes positive steps to widen pupils' understanding of different cultures and religions. This helps to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders work hard to involve parents in their children's school life, for example by providing information evenings to help support their child's learning at home. Parents value the accessibility of leaders and teachers to discuss any concerns they might have.
- The support from the local authority has been too variable. The consultants working with leaders do not have a comprehensive knowledge of the school's performance information and the quality of teaching, which has limited their ability to influence greater improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are effective. They have an accurate view of how well the school is doing compared to others nationally and locally. They assess the quality of teaching from the detailed and accurate reports they have from the headteacher. They check that the reports are accurate through the questions they ask and through regular visits to the school. They are confident that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, do not underachieve.
 - Governors know about the quality of teaching, but recognise that some highly effective practice is not always shared between all staff. They ensure that any underperformance is challenged and that

effective teachers are rewarded by progression through the pay scales. They are ambitious for the school's future success. They make sure that they remain effective by attending training and sharing their learning with each other.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. For example, governors review all safeguarding procedures monthly and carry out an annual safeguarding audit. This helps keep all pupils safe from harm.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Work seen in pupils' books shows that the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills has improved to good levels.
- Many teachers ask questions that encourage pupils to think and deepen their understanding. Pupils respond eagerly to these questions and are keen to contribute to class discussions. They work well individually, in pairs or as groups.
- Teachers successfully foster an enjoyment of reading. They introduce interesting books to the class and provide a number of effective ways to enthuse pupils to read widely and enthusiastically. There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to apply their reading skills in different subjects to find information. For example, Year 3 pupils used their comprehension skills in a geography lesson to recount facts about mountains.
- Pupils learn well in mathematics because the teaching is good and activities are planned effectively. Pupils say they enjoy the opportunities to challenge themselves and deepen their knowledge. For example, in a Year 6 class, pupils enjoyed investigating the different ways they could predict, estimate and measure a range of objects. Pupils successfully applied their knowledge of area and perimeter to deepen their understanding of mathematics with two-dimensional shapes.
- Teaching assistants provide very effective support for pupils. They explain tasks carefully and are patient with pupils who need more time to understand new ideas.
- Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and provide feedback that helps pupils to know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work further. Pupils' work shows that they respond to this advice and pupils say this feedback helps them to make progress.
- Pupils' work in writing is usually set at the right level of difficulty. There are times, however, when some of the work set is not sufficiently demanding, particularly for the most-able pupils, so that their progress slows. Teachers provide pupils with too few opportunities to edit and proofread their work to enable all pupils to make outstanding progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The pupils are friendly and confident towards visitors, welcoming them warmly and opening doors for them. Pupils are clearly very proud of their school and wish to share their experiences with other people.
- Pupils willingly take on additional responsibilities, such as serving on the school council. Pupils that have been selected to wear red ties are very proud because they have been 'given this opportunity to help run our school'. These responsibilities promote high levels of trust, which in turn leads to a purposeful learning environment.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are very strong. Leaders work closely with the family liaison officer to ensure that little or no time is lost during lessons in order to correct poor behaviour.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying. They know that name-calling, inappropriate language or any form of discrimination is not acceptable. They told inspectors that, on the few occasions that bullying occurs, staff deal with it quickly. The majority of parents, staff and pupils talk positively about pupils' behaviour in the school. Some of the parents who completed the online questionnaire or spoke to inspectors raised behaviour and bullying as concerns. Inspectors viewed a range of evidence which shows that bullying and racist incidents are rare. Pupils who spoke with inspectors agreed this was the case.
- Discussions with staff who support pupils with additional needs show the school has effective links with

external agencies and is very active in supporting children and families who need additional help.

- All governors and staff, together with parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, report that pupils feel safe in school. Those pupils spoken to during the inspection agreed with this opinion.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Conduct in and around the school is typically good and pupils say that they follow the school rules. When pupils come together, for instance in whole-school assembly, they are polite, courteous and show that the school is a happy and harmonious community.
- Pupils respond quickly to teachers' instructions and apply themselves well to their tasks. These positive attitudes contribute significantly to the faster progress now being made.
- Pupils show respect and work collaboratively with each other in lessons. They accept and embrace all of the different cultures within the school.
- Pupils' attendance levels are above the national average. This is because pupils enjoy coming to school and the school is quick to deal with any inappropriate absences.

Outcomes for pupils

are good.

- Pupils join the school with attainment levels which are below the national average. A high level of challenge and good teaching ensures that they now achieve well throughout the school. By the end of Year 6, their attainment is similar to national averages and shows that they have made good progress over time. Consequently, they are well prepared for their next stage of education.
- Information provided by the school about the current achievement of pupils confirms that they typically make good progress, especially in reading and mathematics. Work in books confirms that pupils' achievement has improved since the last inspection.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are given good support, well suited to their specific needs, by teachers and teaching assistants. This is also the case for those who speak English as an additional language. These groups of pupils are currently making good or better progress from their individual starting points. Teachers are keen to include these pupils fully in lessons, demonstrating that the school strongly promotes equality of opportunity.
- The performance of disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics in the 2014 national tests indicated that they were approximately two terms behind other pupils nationally. The results also showed that they were less than two terms behind other pupils in the school. Current checks on these pupils' progress show that these gaps are closing quickly. This shows the school's success in narrowing significantly the gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their peers.
- Throughout the school, the most-able pupils make good progress and an increasing proportion attained higher levels in reading and mathematics in 2015. Even so, their progress in some writing lessons slows, especially where teachers give them tasks that do not challenge them sufficiently.

School details

Unique reference number	118328
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10002340

This inspection 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	470
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patricia Daniels
Headteacher	Kim Parnell
Telephone number	01634 843833
Website	www.balfour-jun.medway.sch.uk
Email address	parnk006@medway.org
Date of previous inspection	23 September 2013

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized junior school.
- The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is above average. Of these, the proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is just above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding given to the school for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority) is broadly average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been changes in leadership since the last inspection, with the appointment of a new deputy headteacher and Chair of Governors.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 20 lessons; five of these were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Inspectors held meetings with school staff, members of the governing body, parents and carers, and representatives from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding documents, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance and pupils' work in their books.
- A discussion was held with a group of pupils, as well as informal conversations with other pupils during lessons and at breaktimes. Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about the books they enjoy.
- Inspectors took account of 52 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own surveys, as well as two letters received from parents.
- Inspectors took into consideration the 41 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

David Harris, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Brian Simber	Ofsted Inspector
Stephanie Scutter	Ofsted Inspector

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