

Balfour Primary School

Balfour Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 6NE

Inspection dates

8–9 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Disadvantaged pupils make slower progress than their peers, especially in writing. The school’s pupil premium strategy has not met their academic needs well enough.
- Sometimes, the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged in lessons. This slows their progress over time.
- Additional support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities does not help them to make sufficient academic progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Balfour Primary School is a place where pupils can be themselves and are respected as individuals. Pupils enjoy coming to school, they attend regularly and play together well. Behaviour is good.
- This is an improving school. Senior leaders have tackled previous weaknesses in teaching. As a result, the quality of teaching is now good and improving.
- Improved teaching of reading has led to stronger outcomes in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. Pupils make rapid progress in reading in key stage 2.
- Children make a good start to their education in the Reception Year. Parents are very happy with the support their children receive when they start school.
- Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is well developed. Pupils’ learning is enhanced by the opportunity to use a philosophical approach to thinking about important issues.
- Leaders and staff care deeply about pupils’ personal development and welfare. The curriculum includes many opportunities to help pupils learn to stay safe and healthy.
- Leaders have planned a broad and balanced curriculum that provides pupils with a range of exciting learning experiences and opportunities.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective.
- The governing body has been reinvigorated. New governors are already having a demonstrable impact on helping the school to improve quickly.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils, especially in writing, by:
 - strengthening the pupil premium strategy so that funding and actions help to address pupils' barriers to learning that leaders have recognised
 - ensuring that ambitious targets for the progress of disadvantaged pupils throughout the school are included in action plans
 - focusing on spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting, so that gaps in pupils' skills in these areas are closed.
- Further accelerate the progress of the most able pupils by:
 - ensuring that they are stretched and challenged in lessons
 - tracking pupils with high prior attainment to ensure that they reach the higher standards.
- Review the effectiveness of academic interventions for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Balfour Primary School is a vibrant community filled with pupils who are respectful, friendly, caring and enthusiastic. Pupils fully live up to the school's values. The headteacher's vision is to develop ambitious, lifelong learners.
- Everyone in the school is respected as an individual. Pupils have worked together to create a flag that promotes and celebrates the huge diversity in the Balfour community.
- The curriculum has a topic-based approach that ensures that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are developed in a wide range of subjects. The curriculum is enhanced by special events and trips that help bring learning to life. For example, pupils have opportunities to perform in music concerts and take part in residential visits. Sports funding is used effectively to improve pupils' health, well-being and participation in competitive sport.
- The school is never dull; there is always something going on. As one parent explained: 'There is a palpable sense of community and genuine excitement around events and initiatives.' Pupils value the impressive range of extra-curricular clubs and even organise their own to complement them.
- The very strong links with the community help to prepare pupils successfully for life in modern Britain. Pupils leave Balfour Primary School as mature citizens with great tolerance and respect for others.
- The senior leadership team has been strengthened by the appointment of two assistant headteachers who each take responsibility for a key stage. They work very well with the deputy headteachers and, together, these senior leaders are an impressive force for improvement.
- Already, the new leadership team has led substantial improvements in teaching and sustained the strengths that already existed in early years. As a team, leaders' actions are beginning to have an impact on improving pupils' outcomes, but some variations in performance still remain.
- Leaders have successfully used professional development opportunities for staff, checks on the quality of teaching, and performance management to help them to make improvements.
- In the past, improvement planning has been too focused on various curriculum innovations and not on the impact that these innovations will have on pupils' progress throughout the school.
- Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of what needs to be done next to improve the school further. They have rightly refocused their efforts on the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has contributed to improving their well-being but has not been used effectively to improve their academic progress. The same is true for additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The leadership of provision for these groups of pupils is currently being strengthened by the

assistant headteachers taking a more prominent role in checking the impact of teaching and interventions on the progress of these groups.

- The headteacher values the partnership with the local authority. A consultant from the local authority has visited each term and has contributed to improvements in teaching.

Governance of the school

- Over the last year, there have been a number of changes to the governing body, including the appointment of a new chair of governors. These changes have added significant additional skills and expertise to the group and prompted a new level of rigour. Governors are now having a significant impact on raising standards.
- The new chair of governors has, in a short space of time, reviewed the performance of the governing body, gained the trust and respect of school leaders and identified key priorities for improvement. Under her highly skilled leadership, the governing body is having a far greater impact. Given her extensive experience and skills outside of education, the chair of governors is determined and confident that standards and outcomes will improve quickly. She has sought and received expert guidance to quickly develop her understanding of education.
- The refreshed governing body is challenging leaders to accelerate the necessary improvements so that outcomes for pupils improve quickly. For example, governors now receive more succinct and helpful information from senior leaders, and they have instigated a rigorous action plan to check that leaders are improving outcomes for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Governors visit the school regularly to check for themselves the progress that is being made.
- Governors know that in the past they have not focused carefully enough on the progress of disadvantaged pupils and the impact of pupil premium funding. The current governing body has already planned an in-depth review of the ways in which pupil premium is used, to help them better understand the barriers to rapid improvement in pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Responsibility for safeguarding is shared by six members of senior staff. They have received up-to-date training and have a thorough knowledge of the most frequently occurring types of harm that could affect pupils attending the school. They know individual pupils and their families well, and this helps to keep the most vulnerable pupils safe from harm.
- Checks on new staff and induction procedures are robust. All staff receive regular training to help them understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff are vigilant and particularly aware of specific risks such as neglect, family mental health issues or child sexual exploitation.
- Leaders have strengthened the safeguarding culture recently by improving site security and adopting an electronic system to record concerns about pupils.

- The school works well with other professionals to ensure that pupils are safeguarded from harm.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have been instrumental in improving teaching throughout the school. There are now very many strengths. Pupils enjoy being challenged and having to think deeply.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to ask probing questions that make pupils think. Time is almost always used wisely, and pupils are keen to work hard.
- Pupils are normally highly engaged in their work. They watch and listen carefully as teachers expertly model their expectations and introduce new content. Pupils discuss their work sensibly with each other, to clarify their understanding.
- Teaching assistants have a positive impact on learning. They unobtrusively support those pupils that need help with their learning and behaviour. Teachers, teaching assistants and pupils contribute equally to making classrooms a positive place to be.
- Phonics is taught accurately and, as a result, the outcomes in this key area of reading have improved in recent years. Reading is taught effectively in key stage 2. One of the most able pupils told an inspector that: 'The school helps me to read. They introduced me to thicker books and it's a really nice thing to do now.'
- There is a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics. Pupils complete activities to improve their fluency with calculations, to develop their problem-solving skills and to check their mathematical reasoning.
- Inspectors observed pupils making a choice about the level of difficulty they would tackle in their mathematics work. On the whole, pupils chose work sensibly to challenge themselves, or to have some extra practice if they found something tricky. The most skilled teachers intervened swiftly when work was too easy or too hard, to help pupils to progress quickly. On a few occasions, the most able pupils told inspectors that even the most difficult challenge in mathematics was too easy.
- Leaders have reviewed systems for assessing pupils, to make sure that they are accurate and useful. Moderation with other schools and by the local authority confirms the accuracy of teachers' judgements.
- Despite the very many strengths in teaching, there are some inconsistencies between classes. Leaders are aware of these inconsistencies, which include expectations about presentation, ways in which the most able are challenged and how quickly misconceptions are addressed.
- Although teaching has improved and pupils are making faster progress, some previous weaknesses in outcomes have not yet been overcome.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils, parents and staff have no well-founded concerns about pupils' safety. The school helps pupils to keep safe by teaching them about internet safety, the negative effects of drugs and alcohol, fire safety and riding their bicycles safely.
- Pupils' social and emotional well-being is catered for well. Pupils appreciate the opportunity to share concerns with a learning mentor, or to use the 'chill out' areas. Pupils know that if they place a concern in the 'worry box' it will be dealt with properly.
- Older pupils take on additional responsibilities and help contribute to improving the school and their community. They are democratically elected to roles such as learning leaders, eco leaders, rights respecting champions and house captains.
- There is very little bullying behaviour in the school because pupils care for each other so well. Any minor disagreements are dealt with, and pupils themselves, as well as adults, contribute to any necessary conflict resolution.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school's values and class charters contribute strongly to pupils' positive behaviour.
- Behaviour in class is generally good, and pupils are fully engaged in their work. The only off-task behaviour occurs when work is too easy. Older pupils listen respectfully to each other and discuss issues sensibly.
- Behaviour around the school is good. There is always something going on at breaktimes and lunchtimes. For example, pupils organise and manage their own clubs, with appropriate adult supervision.
- Attendance is above average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved significantly. Leaders rightly have high expectations of families to ensure that their children attend regularly. Very few pupils are persistently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over time, disadvantaged pupils have made slower progress than their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress of disadvantaged pupils in writing, in key stage 2, has been weak.
- Leaders' own assessment information and work in pupils' books confirm that, due to better teaching, current disadvantaged pupils are not falling further behind. However, neither are they yet catching up with their peers in school or with other pupils nationally in writing and mathematics.

- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are not making good progress. Leaders' own assessment information shows that additional teaching (intervention) is not consistently helping these pupils to close the gaps in attainment. Leaders agreed that, in many cases, these pupils are likely to make faster progress by remaining in class where the teaching and support is good.
- The progress of the most able pupils is too variable. Sometimes, the most able pupils do not receive challenging work in lessons, especially mathematics. Some current pupils who exceeded the early learning goals in Reception have not sustained the higher standards by the end of key stage 1.
- In the past, progress through key stage 2 has been slower in writing and mathematics. While attainment has been improving, it is still only broadly average by the end of key stage 2 in writing and mathematics. This is despite many pupils entering the school with skills and knowledge that are more advanced than the national average.
- Observations in lessons and work in pupils' books show that in most year groups pupils are starting to make stronger progress in writing and mathematics this academic year, so that it now matches the progress in reading. However, despite the stronger teaching and progress, there has not been time to eradicate the effects of pupils' previous underperformance. One example of this is evident in pupils' spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting skills.
- Pupils make much stronger progress in reading. The outcomes of the Year 1 phonics screening check have improved rapidly, and far more pupils achieve the required standard. Pupils in key stage 2, including the most able, make significantly stronger progress in reading than that found nationally.
- Pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding well in a number of other subjects, including science.

Early years provision

Good

- Parents are very positive about the early years provision. One parent wrote: 'My son has been cared for by teachers and support staff and treated as an individual, and is already making quite amazing progress academically.'
- Leadership of the early years has been highly effective. Leaders have ensured that expectations are high and that the environment is conducive to providing children with interesting and engaging learning opportunities.
- The new Reception leader has made a positive start to her new role and is being exceptionally well supported by her predecessor, who is now the assistant headteacher overseeing key stage 1.
- Teaching in Reception is very effective and helps all children to make good progress. Teachers plan activities and challenges that engage children and make them think. Other adults make a strong contribution by encouraging children to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. Just occasionally, adults do not address children's misconceptions well enough.
- Many children begin school with skills and knowledge that are above those typical for

their age. During the Reception Year, children's skills and knowledge are developed further because of the effective teaching. Only rarely are tasks too easy for the most able children in phonics and writing.

- As a result of this good-quality teaching, more children than found nationally achieve and exceed each of the early learning goals. As a result, children are very well prepared for Year 1. In contrast to the rest of the school, disadvantaged children make faster progress than their peers in Reception.
- Leaders and teachers fully comply with the statutory requirements to keep children in the early years safe.
- Children love to play together, which they do sensibly. Children have the confidence to share work they are proud of with visitors, such as some very impressive writing describing the 'Gruffalo'.

School details

Unique reference number	114382
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10037822

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	849
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rachel Cashman
Headteacher	Marcelo Staricoff
Telephone number	01273 507722
Website	www.balfourprimary.co.uk/
Email address	admin@balfour.brighton-hove.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 November 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Balfour Primary School is much larger than the average primary school. There are four classes in each year group.
- While the proportion of disadvantaged pupils is much smaller than that found nationally, the size of the school means that they form a sizable group in each year.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below national figures.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Over 15% of pupils are from one of many different ethnic groups. A very small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's floor standards that set out the minimum expectations for progress and attainment in primary schools.

- The school operates breakfast clubs in both key stage 1 and key stage 2, which were part of this inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in every class at least once. For many of the observations in classes, inspectors were accompanied by members of the senior leadership team.
- To gain their views of the school, inspectors spoke to pupils in class, around the school and on the playground. They met more formally with two groups of pupils from key stage 2. They also considered 45 responses to Ofsted’s online pupil survey. Inspectors heard some pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders regularly throughout the inspection. They also held meetings with subject leaders, year group leaders and a group of newly or recently qualified teachers. Inspectors also took account of 25 responses to Ofsted’s online staff questionnaire.
- Her Majesty’s Inspector met with six members of the governing body including the chair of governors. He also had an additional meeting with the chair of governors. Her Majesty’s Inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with a significant number of parents on the playground at the beginning of the inspection, and with two other parents who requested to speak to them during the inspection. Inspectors took account of the 227 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, including 160 free-text comments.
- Documentation relating to school improvement, behaviour, attendance, pupils’ progress, the quality of teaching, performance management, governance and safeguarding was scrutinised by inspectors.

Inspection team

Lee Selby, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
James Munt	Ofsted Inspector
Kevin Parfoot	Ofsted Inspector
Stephanie Scutter	Ofsted Inspector

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