

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



17 December 2018

Mrs Kim Parnell
Headteacher
Balfour Junior Academy
Balfour Road
Chatham
Kent
ME4 6QX

Dear Mrs Parnell

Short inspection of Balfour Junior Academy

Following my visit to the school on 5 December 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In January 2017, the school became an academy. It is now part of the Fort Pitt Thomas Aveling Academies Trust (FPTA), a multi-academy trust (MAT) comprising five Medway schools. The headteacher of one of the secondary schools is the chief executive officer of the trust. You work effectively within the trust. Balfour Junior benefits from the links with the other schools in terms of training, developing leadership skills, sharing good practice and opportunities for pupils. The trust and the governors are supportive and challenging and hold you and other leaders to account effectively for the school's performance.

Your aspirations for the pupils are unwavering. The ambition to provide the best possible learning experiences for pupils is shared by leaders, staff, governors and trust members. You have carefully considered the best leadership structure and curriculum to deliver this. You place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' confidence and their own aspirations and enriching their experience. The school has a strong inclusive ethos. You ensure that pupils who have additional needs are supported effectively so that they get what they need to make progress from their starting points. It is a happy school where everyone is welcome and able to achieve.

Staff have every confidence in your strong leadership. They are proud to work at the school and enjoy doing so. You work closely with your deputy and make a strong team. Together you have ensured that rigorous monitoring informs the accurate school self-evaluation. Your development plan identifies what is working well and what could be even better. You are mindful of the areas for improvement

identified at the last inspection of your predecessor school. The actions that you have taken to improve the quality of teaching and share the most successful practice have led to pupils' improving achievement. This is shown in the 2018 outcomes at the end of Year 6.

Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and trusting. As a result, pupils are not afraid to have a go and try things out. They are prepared to take risks in their learning because they know that their efforts and opinions will be valued. A group of pupils agreed with one who said that 'teachers help you do things you didn't think you could do.' Pupils spoke of how they are never afraid to ask for help if they get stuck, as teachers are kind and caring. Pupils are happy, well behaved, polite and friendly. They said that the school teaches them to be respectful of people from other backgrounds and to treat people equally. They demonstrated this during the inspection. Pupils collaborate and cooperate well with each other in work and play and value the friendships that they develop. Pupils enjoy their time at school and, when asked, were hard pressed to think of anything that they would change.

You and all of the staff work very hard to engage parents and carers. Only a small number of parents responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Those who did, and the parents I spoke to on the morning of the inspection, were very supportive of the school and pleased with the education provided for their children. They were especially appreciative of the fact that you and the deputy, as well as other staff, were in the playground every morning and at the end of the day.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team, including governors, has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Statutory recruitment checks are completed on all adults before they start working at the school. All staff receive the required training, including any updates or new requirements. Policies and procedures are clear and well known by staff. Staff are vigilant in identifying and reporting any concerns and know the pupils very well. You work closely with outside agencies when necessary making appropriate referrals when needed. You actively ensure that pupils and their families receive timely and effective support.

Pupils say that they feel safe and happy in school and that they are well looked after. They know how to keep safe, including when using the internet. This was promoted well by Year 5 pupils during the inspection. Pupils say that they can talk to an adult if they have any worries or concerns. The parents who responded to Parent View and those who spoke to me in the morning agreed that the school keeps their children safe.

You and your staff work very hard to encourage pupils' regular attendance, which has improved and is above the national figure for primary schools. You have also reduced the proportion of pupils with persistently poor attendance and the proportion of pupils who are regularly late for school. You are relentless in your support for families to help provide the best for the pupils.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look at pupils' progress in writing, how well the curriculum supports the progress of different groups of pupils, the impact of the work of other leaders in the school and the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- In recent years, pupils have not made the same rates of progress in writing as they have in reading. You have tackled this over time with a range of successful actions. Outcomes are improving as a result. In 2018, by the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils that attained the expected standard for their age in writing increased from the previous two years and was above the national average. Too few pupils, however, attained greater depth in writing compared with the national average. Pupils' current work shows that they are making strong progress from the starting points assessed by you when they started in Year 3. Pupils enjoy writing. They become skilled at editing their own work to improve it. The curriculum activities provide opportunities that inspire and motivate pupils to write. Strong links are made between reading and writing. Pupils are exposed to high-quality and challenging texts to influence their own writing.
- You and your deputy are resolute in ensuring that the curriculum is broad and balanced. It is designed to offer rich and inspiring opportunities for pupils. There is a wide range of enrichment and innovative activities to capture the needs and interests of all pupils. These activities make a strong contribution to pupils' personal, social and emotional development as well as their academic skills and progress. Pupils are motivated and excited by the curriculum and develop a love of learning. You and your deputy have a clear overview of the progress of different groups of pupils across the school. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils and pupils who speak English as an additional language. The breadth of pupils' learning is not always matched with opportunities to ensure that work for all groups deepens pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills.
- You and the trust set great store in providing quality training to meet whole-school priorities as well as individual teachers' needs. This includes developing leaders and strengthening the capacity for further improvement. The recently restructured leadership team shares your vision and ambition. Leaders welcome the opportunity and support to develop and enhance their leadership skills. Leaders, and governors, have clear plans for their work and undertake monitoring activities. As a consequence, there is a clear awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders know how well individual pupils are making progress and what, if any, additional support is required. Leaders, other than the headteacher and deputy headteacher, do not, however, always have the strategic overview of the progress of different groups throughout the school. The full impact on the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress has yet to be embedded in their work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the role of leaders other than the most senior school leaders is strengthened so that they gain a strategic overview of the achievement of groups and so that their work has a greater impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes
- pupils' achievement continues to improve and that pupils' work deepens their knowledge, understanding and skills.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Medway. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the deputy headteacher. I also met with other leaders in the school. I had meetings with members of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the trust. You accompanied me on visits to classes. During these visits, I spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at their work. I spoke to pupils around the school and in the playground, asking them for their views on the school.

I reviewed the school's website and sampled a range of documents and records, including your evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school development plan, information about pupils' achievement and documents relating to safeguarding. I took into account 25 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I spoke with some parents in the playground at the start of the day. I also considered 31 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.