

# Inspection of a good school: Balfour Junior School

Balfour Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 6QX

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Inspection dates: 22 and 23 May 2024

## **Outcome**

Balfour Junior School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Zoe Mayston. This school is part of Beyond Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Andrew Minchin, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Veen Rama.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils delight in attending this welcoming school. Pupils feel safe and behave exceptionally well, forming strong friendships with one another. Lunchtime play is a joyful time for pupils. They sit and read books under the canopy, clamber over the climbing equipment, build dens and play board games on the game tables. Adults form positive relationships with the pupils, creating an atmosphere that pupils are happy to be in.

The school encourages pupils to find and develop their character and interests well. Pupils learn to play the ukulele tunefully and produce vibrant artwork in their sketchbooks. They uphold the school's values of respect and kindness. For example, they are keen to open a door for an adult in the school corridor and are courteous in class. Pupils are confident in their own opinions and show respect when listening to the views of others.

The school is keen for pupils to achieve well. Pupils are excited about what they learn. They are inquisitive and relish the challenges they face in class. This is because the school matches the curriculum to their needs and interests well. As one pupil said, 'Teachers encourage you and push you to do your best.'

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The school provides an engaging and relevant curriculum. Teachers follow a well-designed curriculum that inspires pupils to learn. The school and trust provide training that helps teachers to refine their practice. As a result, there is a consistent approach to the delivery of the curriculum. Governors ensure that the school diligently addresses the

improvements that are needed. Leaders support teachers to manage their workload. This helps them to focus on learning in class.

The school creates a culture where pupils are highly motivated to learn. Teachers skilfully question pupils in class. This helps them to check what pupils know and understand and respond to pupils who have fallen behind in their learning. Teachers identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. They adapt learning to ensure that pupils achieve well. While teachers are clear about what pupils need to know, they do not always draw on what pupils have learned before to strengthen their learning. This means that some pupils do not embed and use what they know fluently in some subjects.

Pupils develop their reading and mathematical knowledge well. While outcomes in national tests were below national averages in 2023, pupils who have fallen behind are now catching up swiftly. Pupils love reading. They read frequently in school, helping to build their confidence and interest as readers. Teachers select texts that develop pupils' reading fluency, comprehension and vocabulary with confidence. Pupil 'reading ambassadors' help to select reading materials used in class. This provides ownership and interest in what they read in class. Teachers support pupils well in developing their mathematical knowledge. They encourage pupils to explore their mathematical thinking across subjects. This helps pupils to see the purpose of applying their mathematical thinking.

Pupils are keen to attend school. The school works closely and compassionately with families when pupils' attendance is low. As a result, the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent is improving. Pupils' behaviour in class is exceptional. They are attentive and courteous. This creates an environment where learning takes place without distraction.

Pupils receive a fulsome range of wider opportunities that enhance what they learn. The school's character education programme encourages pupils to develop their empathy for others. For example, pupils in the school parliament undertake community litter picks and visit a local care home. The school enhances what is taught in class through trips. Pupils visit local museums and places of worship and learn from visitors to the school. Pupils enjoy attending the many clubs on offer. They relish opportunities to meet and compete with pupils from other schools in local sports events.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- While teachers are clear about what pupils need to know, they do not always draw on what pupils have learned before in order to strengthen learning in class. As a result, some pupils do not embed and use what they know fluently. The school needs to

ensure that teachers are clear about what pupils need to remember and use this to inform their teaching so that pupils achieve even higher standards.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2015.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	143880
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	10322027
<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	475
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Veen Rama
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Andrew Minchin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Zoe Mayston
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.balfourjuniorschool.org.uk">www.balfourjuniorschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of Beyond Schools Trust. The trust has 10 schools, five primary and five secondary schools.
- The school provides breakfast and after-school care on site for up to 30 pupils. This is run by an external provider.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, trust leaders, other leaders and a range of staff at the school.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documents, including those related to the governance of the school.
- The inspector considered the views of parents and carers through their responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The inspector spoke to staff and pupils during the inspection and took account of staff and pupil responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

### **Inspection team**

Graham Chisnell, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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