

# Balfour Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114382
<b>Local Authority</b>	Brighton and Hove
<b>Inspection number</b>	289892
<b>Inspection date</b>	14 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Juliet Ward HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	359
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Allen Sanders
<b>Headteacher</b>	Judith Kemp
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 March 2002
<b>School address</b>	Balfour Road Brighton BN1 6NE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01273 500617
<b>Fax number</b>	01273 565808

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<b>Age group</b>	4–7
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

## Description of the school

Balfour Infant School is a popular community school situated in an area of socio-economic advantage. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils whose first language is not English is slightly higher than average. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Silver, the Eco Schools Bronze, the School Achievement Silver, the Artsmark Silver and Investors in People awards.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Balfour Infant School is an outstanding school and significant elements are exemplary. The overwhelming majority of parents agree. As one parent said, 'There is a real 'family feel' about the school with dedicated staff pulling together for the benefit of the children.' The school promotes and achieves high standards in English, mathematics and science. Children in the Foundation Stage enter school with generally good skills and make very good progress in all areas of learning during the Reception Year. The good and outstanding teaching throughout Key Stage 1 and the focus on improving literacy skills mean all pupils, especially girls, make excellent progress in reading and writing by the end of Year 2 and, as a result, their achievement is also outstanding.

A significant strength is the progress made by pupils throughout the school in comparison with progress made by pupils attending schools in similar contexts. Pupils in all years, especially girls, do very well as a result of well targeted and consistently good or better teaching. The school has rightly identified the difference in the progress made by boys as a priority for development and focused on adapting the curriculum to provide enriching tasks and activities which will increase the engagement of boys in their learning.

The quality of care provided for pupils is outstanding. Pupils respond very well to all of their learning opportunities, and say they are very happy in the school. They explain confidently why they need to eat healthily, take exercise, and be careful in certain situations. The school actively encourages pupils to walk to school and all the pupils take part in a range of events to enhance their physical and personal health. The curriculum is enhanced significantly by a wide range of extra-curricular activities which promote pupils' personal development and well-being, and contribute to a strong sense of teamwork amongst staff and pupils. Pupils are very well supported pastorally and academically. Balfour Infant School is highly successful in its aim to be an inclusive school.

The headteacher, very ably supported by the deputy headteacher, is an exceptionally good motivator and the leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The leadership team has an excellent knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. There are clear links between self-evaluation, improvement planning and raising standards. The school has an excellent capacity to improve further. It provides very good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Although the boys already make progress above the National average, accelerate the rate of progress further to help them make the outstanding progress made by the girls throughout the school.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

Pupils enter the Reception classes with above average standards. They make very good progress during their Reception Year and are well prepared to enter Year 1. The highly effective opportunities provided throughout the Foundation Stage to learn through play and exploration ensure the pupils' independence and ability to communicate with each other, and build extremely

well from their starting points. Several parents commented that their children had blossomed into happy and confident Year 1 pupils after a very nurturing Reception Year.

The rate of progress increases through Key Stage 1 and pupils reach very high standards in reading, mathematics and science, and high standards in writing. Significantly more pupils gain the higher levels than nationally in the national assessments at the end of Year 2. Un-moderated assessments indicate that many pupils are set to exceed their targets for 2007. These targets are very challenging and they respond to them well, so this represents outstanding achievement. The school has identified the relative underperformance of boys and has put in place several strategies to tackle it. Pupils at risk of underachieving are identified early and they are given excellent support and guidance. As a result, all pupils make at least good and usually excellent progress, including those with additional learning needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The personal development and well-being of pupils are outstanding. Independence is encouraged from the moment they join the school so pupils are confident and mature. They know right from wrong, and are polite and courteous. Pupils enjoy school and behave very well, as reflected in the exemplary attitudes to learning and good attendance. They know how to keep safe and say confidently that they know what to do or who to talk to if they feel upset or need help. Pupils enjoy a very good range of physical activities the school offers, particularly basketball, football and dance. They love taking part in events such as the Brighton Dance Festival. They make an excellent contribution to the community by raising money for charity, including for their partner school overseas.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding because it is thoroughly planned for, and well integrated into all areas of the curriculum. Pupils have a very good understanding of a wide range of other cultures and religions because practical links are made, through for example, celebrating Chinese New Year.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching is at least good with many outstanding features. This is a key reason why pupils make excellent progress overall and reach high standards. Teachers work very well together in year group teams and as a staff. This means that they plan lessons together which are interesting and engage the pupils, although some inconsistencies in teaching remain that slow progress at times for some pupils. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and they target questions to ensure that all the pupils contribute. The way assessment information is used to ensure tasks are carefully matched to the range of individual needs is good and teachers have high expectations of the pupils. Teaching assistants are very well deployed, especially in group work. Parents are encouraged to take an active role in supporting their children's learning and there are plans to set up a learning link for parents on the school's excellent website. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own work and that of their peers. Marking is thorough and celebrates what pupils have done well but also indicates how they can improve.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is well organised. There is a good balance between time spent on teaching English, mathematics and science and on other subjects. The school has identified areas of the curriculum requiring better resources, for example the range of reading material. These gaps are being filled in a number of ways, including subscribing to the local authority's library service. Classrooms are bright and welcoming and reflect the broadening nature of the curriculum. The school has reviewed the curriculum and is reinforcing cross-curricular themes so that the pupils' creative thinking and learning are developed further. Parents are delighted with the changes made in the curriculum. One parent wrote 'The introduction of creative afternoons has been a great innovation; these have really enriched the curriculum and have been greatly enjoyed by the children.'

Teachers use assessment information effectively to plan a curriculum to meet the needs of the pupils. For example, intervention programmes for lower attaining pupils in English and mathematics are well planned.

The curriculum is enhanced significantly by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. It reflects the school's strong commitment to encouraging pupils to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Personal, social and health education have a high profile.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

There is a strong ethos of a caring community throughout the school. Relationships are very good. Pupils are well supported pastorally and academically by teachers and teaching assistants. Consequently, pupils feel secure in answering questions and in learning from their mistakes. Pupils with additional learning needs are well supported. There are excellent links with outside agencies to promote their well-being and ensure that their needs are fully met. Health and safety checks and assessments are carried out rigorously and safeguarding procedures are robust. Transition arrangements are very well managed when pupils join the school, change classes and move to junior school.

Pupils are highly motivated to achieve their very challenging targets and are very well supported in this by their teachers. This support and pupils' enthusiastic responses to the school's teaching carry them through to make the outstanding progress the school expects of them.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The school is led and managed exceptionally well. The headteacher is an outstanding leader and she is very well supported by a very able deputy headteacher. Together with the senior leadership team, they provide a very clear sense of direction. There is a strong sense of teamwork throughout the school. All teachers have roles as leaders and carry out their duties effectively. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored regularly and teachers receive open and honest feedback. The coordination of provision for pupils with additional learning needs is very good. The school is highly successful in being an inclusive school.

The school improvement planning process is well developed and all staff contribute. An exemplary feature is the senior leaders' knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and their rigorous analysis of pupils' progress and performance from year to year. This results in well focused action plans which identify the right priorities. For example, staff development has been targeted appropriately at enriching the curriculum since the last inspection. The school was well aware of the need to improve resources for information and communication technology further, and has done so effectively. There are clear links between financial planning, the deployment of resources and the raising of standards.

Governance is good despite several recent changes on the governing body. Governors have taken a role in enhancing lines of communication with parents. They are now actively involved in providing input into the self-evaluation which is key to developing their strategic role in holding the school to account.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Balfour Infant School, Brighton and Hove BN1 6NE

What a friendly place to come to visit! Thank you for making my time with you so pleasant. I enjoyed talking to you and listening to how much you like coming to school. It was also good to see how much you enjoy learning. I was very impressed by the good work you do in reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology. I was disappointed to have only one day in your school because I would have liked to have seen more of your work. This is what I found:

- Your school is outstanding and all of the adults working with you care very much about you and want you to do well.
- You make really good progress during your time at Balfour and are ready to manage even harder work when you move to the junior school.
- Your teachers make lessons interesting and also give you homework which you said you enjoyed.
- You behave very well indeed, listen well in lessons and work hard.
- I was very impressed with how reception children worked on investigating capacity containers and also enjoyed looking at the interesting work you are doing in history. It was good to see how hard you have worked to improve your writing.
- Your parents said how much they liked the school and lots of you told me how well you get on together and how helpful the teachers are.
- It was good to see how kind you are and how willingly you help others.

I have asked the teachers to make parts of the school even better. I agree with your teachers that the boys can do even better. The teachers are making sure the lessons are really interesting for all pupils, including boys, and I look forward to hearing that boys are achieving as well as girls.

Thank you again for helping to make my day interesting. I hope you will always be as happy at school.

Juliet Ward Her Majesty's Inspector