



# Balfour Infant School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 118329  
**Local Authority** Medway  
**Inspection number** 291094  
**Inspection date** 28 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Jacqueline Krafft 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>	Infant	<b>School address</b>	Pattens Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community		Rochester
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-7		ME1 2QT
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 338280
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	263	<b>Fax number</b>	01634 338081
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	N Timlick / Carol Timlick
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Barbara Padmore
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 July 2001		

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Balfour is a larger-than-average infant school located in an urban community. The socio-economic circumstances of families are mixed. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities has increased and is average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. Three quarters of the pupils are of White British heritage, with the largest minority ethnic group being of Asian heritage. A higher proportion than average speaks English as an additional language.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils achieve exceptionally well and develop high levels of confidence and independence that equip them extremely well for the next stages of learning. This view is shared by almost all parents. One wrote, 'A great school. My child is achieving very well. I am proud that my child is part of Balfour Infants.'

The school's results have improved over the last five years and pupils make outstanding progress to reach standards that are significantly above the national average. This determination that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve as well as they can is driven by the excellent headteacher. She sets challenging targets and these high expectations are shared by her newly appointed deputy, subject leaders and governors, who have continued the drive during the headteacher's sickness absence.

Rigorous, frequent tracking of pupils' progress and exemplary monitoring have resulted in outstanding teaching which actively involves all pupils in their learning. Excellent academic guidance and support ensure that parents and pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. As one parent wrote, 'We are consulted frequently and kept informed'. The interesting and relevant curriculum meets all pupils' needs exceptionally well and is enriched by the use of drama and good quality resources. Pupils keenly participate in a very good range of extra-curricular activities.

Very good links are forged with parents and the local community. A parent summed this up when they wrote, 'A child-orientated, child-centred school that has a fantastic community standing.' These links are of particular benefit when pupils start school because they inform the consistently good planning and assessment in the Reception classes. As a result, pupils are given excellent support and care, tasks are well matched to their individual needs and they make good progress in their academic and personal development.

These good foundations are built on very well as pupils move through the school so that their personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils are mature, confident and articulate, and work exceptionally well together or independently. They justifiably feel well cared for and speak with complete confidence when they say their views are listened to and acted on, particularly through the active school council, which one parent noted was excellent.

All staff and governors are involved in rigorous, honest and continuous evaluation of the school's performance. It is very well informed by detailed analysis of performance data and excellent monitoring information. The plan for improvement developed as a result is relevant but lacks clarity. The key priorities for development and how they are going to be precisely measured are not as sharply focused as they could be, given the excellent self-evaluation. Improvement since the previous inspection, when the school was judged to be very good, has continued and the school has demonstrated it has outstanding capacity to improve even further.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Determine precise, manageable priorities for improvement with clear, measurable success criteria.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

When they start school most pupils have the skills and knowledge expected of their age. Very good teaching, well-targeted support and careful monitoring ensure that all pupils make good progress, particularly in the development of early reading skills. All reach the expected levels, although few go beyond, by the time they enter Year 1. They also develop good levels of independence.

The rate of progress increases through Key Stage 1 and pupils reach high standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Significantly more pupils achieve the higher levels than nationally in the Year 2 assessments. This is because they have challenging targets which they and their parents aspire to. Pupils at risk of underachievement are identified early and they are given excellent support and guidance. As a result, all pupils make at least good progress and often excellent progress, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

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. Most enjoy school and behave 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 the good range of physical activities the school offers, particularly dance and gymnastics, because they say they are fun and help them keep fit and healthy. They make an excellent contribution to the community by raising money for charity, including for one of their partner schools overseas. Their 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. For example, the community Sikh leader has visited and pupils learned about Sikh weddings by dressing up in traditional costumes.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding so pupils make exceptionally good progress and reach high standards. The key to this high quality is the consistency of approach in planning, classroom management and the use of assessment information to ensure tasks are carefully matched to the range of individual needs. The pace of lessons is brisk and tasks are relevant and interesting so pupils enjoy them, work productively and respond enthusiastically. Expectations are very high and made clear so pupils know what they will be learning and how they and their teachers will measure their success. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own work and that of their peers and marking is thorough. It celebrates what pupils have done well but also indicates how they can improve.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum is rich, varied and carefully matched to the needs of all learners, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities. Opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills, particularly through drama, are firmly embedded in all areas of the curriculum. This has had a significant impact on improving language development and understanding, particularly for those who speak English as an additional language. Very good cross-curricular links are made to ensure learning is relevant and interesting. For example, links have been made in studying Florence Nightingale with personal, social and health education and science. There is an extensive range of well-attended extra-curricular activities, including a daily nurture group and art and craft club. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of visitors to school, visits and themed curriculum weeks.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

The outstanding care, guidance and support offered is summed up by a parent who wrote, 'The school fills me with confidence knowing my child is in the care of such approachable people.'

Health and safety checks and risk assessments are carried out rigorously and safeguarding procedures are robust. Pupils are well supervised by suitably qualified staff. Pupils are given excellent guidance and support and so meet or exceed their challenging targets. Links with specialist agencies such as the speech and language service are used extremely well to develop the skills of well-trained teaching assistants, who are deployed very effectively to support pupils who need their help.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The excellent headteacher has a clear vision which is firmly focused on the personal development and academic achievement of all pupils. It is a testament to her outstanding leadership that, during her long-term sickness absence, the school has been able to continue the relentless drive for continual improvement. This point was noted by a parent who commented, 'The school has remained constant and continued its high standards despite recent staffing problems due to ill health and retirement.' This has been possible because of the very good quality of leadership at all levels and the exemplary systems of monitoring, pupil tracking and evaluation that are firmly established. Staff are held to account for the achievement of pupils and so have a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Self-evaluation is honest and rigorous, involving all staff and governors, although the improvement plan developed from the self-evaluation is not specific enough in the identification of the key priorities for improvement. Governors fulfil their statutory requirements and support and challenge the school well.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<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	2
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	2
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	2
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	2
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>	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<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.

## 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**

I would like to thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school. I really enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and seeing you in lessons.

Your school is an outstanding school where you make excellent progress in your work. You are cared for really well. You behave well, are polite and care for each other. You have lots of extra activities and clubs which many of you attend. You particularly like the dance club. Your teachers make the lessons really interesting for you by giving you lots of things to do and getting you involved. You and your parents know what is expected of you and how to make your work even better. When you find things a bit difficult your teachers and the teaching assistants make sure you get the help you need.

To help the school get even better I have asked the headteacher and governors to make sure they are really clear about the things they are planning to improve next.

Thank you again for making me so welcome and I hope that you carry on working hard and doing so well.