

Balfour Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114382
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	338348
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Wendy Forbes

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	359
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Katherine Butcher
Headteacher	Judith Kemp
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Sixteen lessons were observed and all but one teacher was seen teaching. Inspectors visited all classrooms to sample displays, behaviour and resources, and held meetings with governors, staff and a group of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of school documentation including teachers' planning, pupils' books, the school improvement and curriculum plans, monitoring and evaluation records, assessment information, individual education plans, minutes of meetings, safety records, assessment information and the reports of the School Improvement Partner. They analysed 75 questionnaires returned by parents and carers together with 17 returned by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- attainment on entry to Reception, children's progress in their Reception Year and the provision for outdoor learning
- progress of pupils currently in Years 1 and 2, focusing on improvements in writing, particularly for the most able pupils and for boys
- what pupils know about different cultures, and how well the school promoted this aspect of their learning
- the impact of the newly-designed and enriched curriculum on pupils' personal development
- the school's capacity to sustain its 'outstanding' achievements.

Information about the school

Balfour is a larger than average infant school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average and includes pupils with specific medical and learning needs. The proportion known to be eligible for free schools meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is well below average. A daily breakfast club is operated by the school. The school has achieved a number of awards including Arts Mark (Gold), Eco (Silver), Healthy Schools and Activemark.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school where pupils are very happy, work hard and achieve exceptionally well to attain very high standards. It is not just academic standards that are high. Pupils' personal development is as outstanding as their academic progress.

From the moment they start in the Reception class, children are treated as equal partners in their learning. Their views are taken into account and their opinions are valued. As a result, children quickly become highly independent and confident learners. Outstanding provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage means that they have a very happy start to school life.

The school has not stood still. Improvements in teaching, the curriculum and reading resources since the last inspection mean that attainment in reading is now high. The small gap between boys' and girls' attainment has disappeared and the attainment of more able pupils in writing now matches that in reading and mathematics. Staff and leaders at all levels have a much-improved capacity to measure pupils' attainment and achievement and track their progress in all subjects. The school has excellent capacity to continue such improvement because self-evaluation is accurate; no stone is left unturned, and no weakness is too small to be tackled in the school's relentless drive for excellence in all it does.

The headteacher's dynamic leadership enthuses others to have the highest possible aspirations for themselves and the pupils. She has developed a strong staff team who are totally committed to school improvement and who strive constantly for excellence. The headteacher's ambitious vision and total rejection of complacency is manifest in the stimulating learning environment. Parents are highly supportive of the school and all that it does for their children. As one parent said, "The problem with the school is that my child wants to go to the school at the weekend as well!"

Across the school, teaching is consistently good, and sometimes outstanding. The difference between the good and outstanding teaching is in the pace of lessons and the extent to which they maintain exciting and challenging experiences. Much is done to help pupils consider how well they have worked and what they most enjoyed. The otherwise well-constructed self-assessment opportunities focus heavily on the pupils' enjoyment of learning, missing opportunities to encourage pupils to evaluate how they could improve. Teachers, supported by skilful teaching assistants, have embraced the school's stimulating curriculum, making learning meaningful and providing captivating topics that excite pupils. Interesting, colourful and stimulating classrooms foster purposeful environments where pupils love learning and achieve exceptionally well. Pupils' excellent behaviour and attendance reflect their desire to be at school.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching and learning so that it is consistently outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all lessons are pitched at an appropriate pace to ensure the engagement of pupils at all times
 - encouraging pupils to comment on their progress as well as their enjoyment in learning when they evaluate the outcomes of their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

These are the grades for the quality of provision

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2 2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1 1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1 1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

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Views of parents and carers

Comments such as 'the school is caring and welcoming', 'staff really help our children to do their best' and 'our children are excited in their learning' typify the responses from parents. Parents appreciate opportunities to attend class assemblies to celebrate their child's achievements as well as the 'open house' sessions which provide opportunities to find out what pupils are learning at school. A very small number of parents felt that communication could be further improved and that their children were not making enough progress. Inspectors found pupils' learning and progress to be outstanding and that the school is constantly working hard to further improve communication.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	75	18	24	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	55	73	19	25	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	37	49	36	48	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	52	69	21	28	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	57	76	17	23	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	55	32	43	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	55	34	45	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	36	48	31	41	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	59	26	35	4	50	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	52	32	43	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	36	38	51	7	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	38	51	30	40	1	1	3	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	56	75	18	24	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



7 May 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Balfour Infant School, Brighton BN1 6NE

I want to say thank you very much for the very warm welcome you gave all of us when we visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed visiting your school and it was a real delight to talk to you and find out about all the exciting things you do and how well you learn. Yours is an outstanding school.

All the adults in your school look after you really well and want to do their best for you. Your behaviour is excellent and you care a lot about each other. You make good progress in all of your learning because, as Reception children said, your teachers let you do □some really fun things□. You do really well in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2 and you are very well prepared for your work in the junior school. Everybody in your school is always trying to find ways to make it even better. You have made a really good start in understanding how you can improve your own learning but there are a couple of things we have asked your school to do to help you understand this even more. They are:

- to make all your lessons the best they can be by:
- making sure you don't spend too long sitting on the carpet at the start of each lesson
- by asking teachers to regularly check you know how well you are doing in your learning.

Thank you very much once again. Keep up the good work and we are sure that if you do this, you will continue to enjoy learning for a long time to come.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Forbes

Lead inspector

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