

# Balfour Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118329
<b>Local Authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	339194
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 January 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mike Capper

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 category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	269
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Nicola Timlick
<b>Headteacher</b>	Barbara Padmore
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 February 2007
<b>School address</b>	Pattens Lane Rochester Kent ME1 2QT
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<b>Email address</b>	office@balfourinfant.medway.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The majority of time was spent looking at learning; 17 lessons were observed and nine teachers were seen. Meetings were held with governors, staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at teachers' planning, the school's assessment information, safeguarding policies and samples of pupils' work. Inspectors analysed questionnaires from staff and pupils, as well as 117 from parents and carers.

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

- how well pupils, especially the more able, improve their writing skills
- how successfully the curriculum has been developed and its impact on pupils' enjoyment
- how well pupils take responsibility and understand how to improve their work
- the impact of subject leadership on school improvement.

## Information about the school

Most pupils come to this large infant school from the local community. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Most, but not all, of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. Most pupils are of White British heritage but a few come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Only a very few are at the early stages of learning English.

The school has an Activemark award for its work in physical education, as well as Healthy School accreditation.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

### Main findings

Parents, carers and pupils are rightly proud of this good school. One parent summed up some of its key strengths when writing, 'I feel happy knowing that I am leaving my child in a safe environment where she is gaining so much.'

Pupils' achievement and enjoyment is outstanding. Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and continue to make good progress in the rest of the school. They are taught well most of the time and reach high standards by the end of Year 2. Teachers support learning well and they mostly meet differing needs effectively. Pupils quickly improve their writing skills, with the most able being challenged well. On the small number of occasions where teaching is satisfactory it is because work does not provide the right levels of challenge for the differing levels of ability within the class. Throughout the school, skilled teaching assistants make a strong contribution to the work of the school, ensuring that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.

The pupils are superb ambassadors for the school. Systems for safeguarding pupils are exemplary and the care and support they receive is of the highest quality. This is enhanced further through excellent partnerships with outside agencies. As a consequence, pupils grow enormously in confidence and show excellent concern for the needs of others. They very enthusiastically take on responsibilities and make an excellent contribution to the community through, for example, the activities of the enthusiastic school council. Most pupils know how to improve their work. However, this is less strong where the school's policies for the marking of work and the setting of targets are not followed closely enough.

This is a school that is not happy to rest on its laurels. Senior leaders are passionate about giving the pupils the best possible start to their education and their strong drive for improvement is shared by all. The school engages extremely well with parents and carers and this contributes enormously to the school's success. Leaders know what needs improving because there are very thorough systems for checking school effectiveness. Subject leaders are keen and enthusiastic and already play a major role in securing improvement. Subject leaders are now rightly taking greater responsibility for analysing data so that they can check on the progress of different groups for themselves. Some subject leaders have already made a good start to this.

Pupils' attainment has risen since the last inspection and the school has successfully demonstrated that it has a good capacity for further improvement, for example, in the way that it has strengthened the curriculum to make learning more purposeful and enjoyable.

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

- Ensure that all teaching is at least good by ensuring:
  - work is always pitched at the right level for all pupils
  - policies on the marking of work and target setting are followed consistently across the school.
- Ensure that subject leaders make sharper use of performance data to check that all groups of pupils are doing well enough.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Pupils' good behaviour and their enthusiasm in lessons contribute well to their good learning and progress. Their achievement is outstanding and the high attainment and good progress seen in assessments at the end of Year 2 is also evident in many lessons. In an outstanding Year 2 literacy lesson, pupils made very quick progress in improving their writing skills as they became engrossed in planning and acting out their stories about 'The Ice Queen'. In a good numeracy lesson in Year 1, pupils learnt well because they were encouraged to think like mathematicians as they explored the properties of shapes. In the two lessons where progress in lessons was satisfactory, the pace of learning was slower because work did not provide enough challenge; for example, a group of pupils who were learning about shapes spent too much time cutting out rather than thinking about the main focus of the lesson. Pupils in the early stages of learning English are supported well in lessons; the strong focus on developing speaking and listening skills has a particularly positive effect on their learning.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and are becoming very skilful at sorting out problems for themselves. Pupils feel extremely safe at school and develop a good understanding of the need for healthy lifestyles. For example, they explain clearly about which foods are good for them and why it is important to drink milk.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<sup>1</sup> 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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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

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

### How effective is the provision?

This is a school that constantly puts the needs of the pupils first. There is a very strong family atmosphere. Members of staff often go the extra mile to ensure that problems are sorted out quickly so that school remains a very happy and very safe place in which to be. Transition arrangements for pupils starting school are excellent. There is a very effective partnership with outside agencies to support pupils who are finding home or school life difficult.

Teachers plan and prepare very thoroughly for lessons. There is a good pace to learning in most lessons and teachers very imaginatively bring subjects alive. For example, in an outstanding Year 1 numeracy lesson, the topic of shapes was made exciting by being linked to a 'visit from aliens'. Teachers have good systems for assessing pupils' learning. Generally good use is made of this information to plan the next stages in learning, although there are still occasions when work is not pitched at the right level for groups of differing abilities. Marking and the setting of targets gives pupils good guidance about how they can improve their work. However, where the school's procedures are not followed closely enough, pupils are less sure about the next stage in their learning.

Clubs and visits support pupils' personal development extremely well, as is demonstrated by the school's success in gaining Activemark and Healthy School awards. Good partnerships with other schools and groups enrich the curriculum in subjects such as music and physical education.

Leaders have done much work since the last inspection to improve the curriculum. Links between subjects are much stronger and, in the second year of this initiative, leaders are rightly evaluating what they have done already to ensure that it is always relevant to

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the pupils' needs and is being applied consistently well in all classes.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

### How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders ensure that there is no complacency, even though attainment is high. There is a good understanding of remaining priorities and the school is doing the right things to ensure that all teaching is good or better. The drive for improvement and the ambitions of senior leaders are shared by staff and governors, all of whom are fully involved in planning for the next stage of development.

The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination successfully. Senior leaders are very thorough in their use of data and this process is now being delegated down to subject leaders so that they can be sure that progress is even across the school. There is no discrimination because pupils learn to respect and understand different beliefs; as one pupil said, 'We are all different but we are all the same.' This helps the school to make a good contribution to community cohesion. Leaders are very responsive to local needs and work very closely with parents and carers. Pupils develop a good understanding of life in other parts of the world through links with a school in The Gambia. Leaders are now working to link with a school in a different part of the United Kingdom to strengthen provision in this area even further.

The school has excellent safeguarding procedures. From the moment adults or pupils enter school, leaders do all they can to ensure that pupils and adults are able to work in a safe and secure environment.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. When they start school, the majority of children are working at the levels expected for their age. Good and sometimes outstanding teaching means that attainment rises to above average levels by the start of Year 1. Children learn quickly because they are very well cared for and teachers plan work that is exciting and fun and generally meets the needs of all abilities. There is a delightful atmosphere in lessons. Children go about their chosen tasks with great purpose and enjoyment and develop good levels of confidence and self-esteem. Children are given many opportunities to explore their own ideas, when, for example, making maps of their journey to school or learning how to count by filling containers with shiny buttons. A recent focus on improving recording skills is having a very positive effect, with many children already confidently recording their number work on paper.

Leaders have a good impact on provision. They have improved teaching and they monitor children's learning extremely closely so that they know what needs improving. They are doing the right things to improve the outdoor areas which are sometimes used as thoroughfares, limiting how well they can be used for parts of each day.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are almost unanimously delighted with all aspects of the school's work. They feel that their children are well cared for, kept safe and have fun. Parents' and carers' views are typically summed up in comments such as, 'It is a happy school' and, 'The school has instilled a love of learning which I hope lasts throughout my child's education.'



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Balfour Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 117 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 269 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	61	45	38	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	94	80	22	19	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	66	56	46	39	4	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	77	66	36	31	3	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	84	72	32	27	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	71	61	41	35	5	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	61	52	54	46	1	1	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)	49	42	58	50	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	59	50	51	44	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	60	51	50	43	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	46	39	58	50	5	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	80	68	33	28	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	83	71	33	28	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



26 January 2010

Dear Children,

Inspection of Balfour Infant School, Rochester ME1 2QT

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for talking to us about your work. You were very polite and friendly. We agree with you that your school is good and that you learn new things quickly.

Some of the things we found out about your school are:

- children in the Reception classes settle very quickly and make good progress. There are exciting things to do and you are very helpful to each other
- in Years 1 and 2, you are taught well and this helps you to make good progress most of the time
- you really enjoy school and you work hard in lessons because adults make learning fun. I thought the 'Ice Queen' plays in Year 2 were excellent!
- you have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and you take responsibility well. The school council does a very good job ' it is great that you help the governors with health and safety checks
- all of the adults in the school are very kind and they look after you extremely well. They give you good help when you are struggling with your work
- the school is well led and managed and all the adults are working very hard to make the school even better.
- your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school.

What I have asked your school to do now:

- make sure that all teachers always plan work that is not too hard or too easy for you, so that you can learn even faster
- give teachers who are in charge of subjects more opportunities to look at information about how well you are doing, so they can help you improve your work even more.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn. You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard and keeping your enthusiasm for learning.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Capper

Lead Inspector

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