

Balcombe CofE Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126006
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	340894
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Eileen Chadwick

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	128
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeff Thompson
Headteacher	Wendy Littlefair
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited seven lessons and five teachers were observed. Inspectors also held meetings with pupils, staff with key responsibilities and with representatives of the governing body. In addition to observing the school's work and evaluating documentation such as policies, the school improvement plan, pupils' work and records of their learning and progress, inspectors examined 58 completed questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- children's attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage, their progress in Reception and their attainment on entry to Year 1
- pupils' current attainment in Year 2 and their progress in Key Stage 1, especially in mathematics for more-capable pupils
- pupils' attainment in the current Year 6 and evenness of their progress in Key Stage 2, especially for lower-attaining and more-capable pupils
- the impact of leadership and management at all levels in raising attainment and improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Information about the school

This is a small primary school which serves the local village and surrounding area. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and these pupils mainly have language, literacy, numeracy or behavioural difficulties. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school has gained the Healthy School award. The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school other than at the usual time is broadly average, although above average in some years. The headteacher took up post in September after a period of disruption to senior leadership due to the illness of the previous headteacher.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Balcombe is a satisfactory school. It successfully fosters a family atmosphere among its small community of pupils and the strong ethos of care and consideration leads to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, good behaviour, attendance and enjoyment of school. Pupils have an excellent awareness of how to stay safe and contribute extremely well to the community in which the school plays an important part. On her arrival, the new headteacher, together with staff and governors, took a critical look at the school's position. They concluded that, although pupils' attainment was average, it was not high enough compared with their skills and knowledge on entry, which are a little above typical expectations. The headteacher quickly identified where improvements were required and developed a more ambitious vision for the future with challenging goals for pupils' achievement. Parents wrote to say they could already see a positive change and one parent expressed their views in saying, 'The headteacher has settled in extremely well and is making many good improvements.'

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Children make a good start in Reception and their attainment is above average overall on entry to Year 1, although more-capable children do not always achieve as well as they are able in shape and space aspects of mathematics. Since the last inspection attainment in reading and writing has improved at Key Stage 1. Pupils make satisfactory progress across Key Stages 1 and 2 so that, by the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils often write fluently for a range of purposes, but spelling and punctuation are relatively weaker aspects and this prevents attainment rising more quickly. In mathematics pupils' mental skills are sometimes slow and there are not enough opportunities for them to apply mathematics to science.

A more rigorous school-wide system to record pupils' achievements has been introduced this year and it is systematically used to accurately measure pupils' progress. Robust checks by the headteacher and staff help to identify any gaps in provision and pupils' progress. The school has strengthened intervention procedures for helping pupils to 'catch up' from any past underachievement, although these have yet to have a full impact for more-capable pupils. Enhanced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has led to these pupils making up some lost ground and their progress is now satisfactory.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers often provide exciting learning contexts, but at times the challenge for more-capable pupils slows or work is too hard for lower-attaining pupils. The school provides a good range of curricular enrichment opportunities and strong partnerships with parents enhance pupils' learning

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The headteacher's strong leadership and management are underpinning school improvements. Subject leaders' roles have been revised and these staff have begun to monitor teaching and learning. The governing body are very supportive and have rightly identified the need to strengthen their ability to evaluate pupils' attainment and progress, including extending their knowledge of the use of data. Development priorities clearly focus on raising achievement, but the school improvement plan does not include enough reference to attainment targets. Given the accuracy and strength of the school's self-evaluation, clear recognition of where action is needed to bring about improvement, and the rise in attainment in literacy at the end of Key Stage 1, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English, mathematics and science, especially the proportion reaching higher levels, by:
 - improving pupils' mental skills in mathematics, and in Reception more-capable children's attainment in shape and space
 - improving pupils' spelling and punctuation skills
 - improving pupils' investigative skills in science and ability to apply mathematics to science.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching and learning by:
 - developing more effective ways to manage pupils' wide range of attainment in the mixed-age classes
 - making better use of assessment to ensure that work is consistently matched to all pupils' abilities throughout different parts of lessons.
- Ensure all those with leadership responsibilities, including governors, actively monitor the quality of provision and use the outcomes to bring about improvement in pupils' attainment by:
 - ensuring the school improvement plan makes clear reference to pupils' targets for attainment
 - increasing opportunities for middle leaders to observe colleagues teach
 - strengthening governors' ability to evaluate data so they can ask the right questions to provide greater levels of challenge in matters of attainment.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' current attainment indicates that the fall in attainment in English and mathematics over the past three years has begun to be arrested. Although attainment is average overall, the attainment for those current Year 6 pupils who remained at the

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school from Key Stage 1 to the end of Key Stage 2 is above average in English and mathematics. A few cohort changes have impacted on overall attainment to an extent because of the small numbers involved. However, for 2009 and the current Year 6, pupils' attainment at the higher levels is not even between subjects, indicating that the more-capable pupils could achieve better in writing, mathematics and science. The school has also correctly identified that pupils' scientific investigative skills are relatively weak.

Adults' excellent relationships with pupils mean that learning takes place in a supportive classroom atmosphere. In a good English lesson for Years 5 and 6, all groups of pupils made good progress in developing their ability to write a persuasive bid for a country to host the next World Cup. Excellent use of a video clip from the prime minister's speech on the subject of England hosting the World Cup brought learning alive and gave pupils a strong role model in the art of persuasion. Pupils' thinking was challenged and, during individual work, writing activities were planned carefully so they matched the range of pupils' abilities. However, there is not yet enough of this consistently good-quality learning across the whole school. The few pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are well supported so that disruptions to others' learning are avoided.

Pupils are responsible and very mature in the way they cooperate and share ideas. By Year 6 they are keen ambassadors for the school and excellent role models for younger pupils. Throughout the school they make an outstanding contribution to the work of the school and their community, for example through the school council, fund-raising, charity and eco work. Along with demonstrating their responsibility within school, of special note is pupils' respect for each others' backgrounds and other people's religions. Their good understanding of the importance of keeping fit and eating healthily is reflected in a national award. Pupils are competent when using computers in different subjects and develop their economic understanding and enterprise skills well when selling products during fund-raising. The extent to which they apply their basic skills prepares them soundly for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3

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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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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 Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers manage pupils well and provide interesting activities which engage their enthusiasm. Resources are used well, including whiteboard technology and computers, to help pupils learn. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and tracking their progress towards their targets have been overhauled and are now good. However, assessment is not having such a positive impact on guiding teachers in how to plan activities which challenge pupils throughout each part of the lesson, especially the more-capable pupils. On occasions the work provided for younger or lower-attaining pupils in the class is too hard. The school does not yet have a uniform approach for enabling teachers to better meet the wide range of pupils' attainment in mixed-age classes, although there are some plans for addressing this.

The school has started to restructure the curriculum so that subjects are carefully linked while ensuring the basics are thoroughly covered. Strong links with the community and other schools enrich pupils' learning experiences. However, while the science curriculum ensures coverage of scientific knowledge, there is not enough emphasis on the development of investigative skills

Pastoral support, guidance and care are good. Pupils who are vulnerable or need extra support are identified effectively. Support for the minority who find difficulty in behaving well has improved through new procedures, so that behaviour is now managed effectively. The school has strong links with parents and other agencies to ensure the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well met. There are thorough induction and transfer arrangements to and from school. Pupils are clear about their own targets and understand what they need to do to improve.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2
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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has communicated her vision for improvement very well to her staff. Her energetic and determined leadership have created a strong sense of purpose with everyone working together to improve pupils' achievement. The development of the new single system for tracking pupils' progress across the school has substantially improved the school's ability to evaluate the impact of its work. All staff are now involved in evaluating pupils' progress with early action being taken to address any underachievement. Subject leaders' roles have been reorganised so that these leaders are more responsible and accountable for the outcomes and provision across the whole school. Their monitoring roles are developing, although, so far, the headteacher has taken most of responsibility for monitoring teaching and learning. The school sets demanding targets, but the improvement plan does not show enough attainment targets for different year groups, especially from the end of Reception to Year 2. This hampers senior leaders, governors and staff in their evaluation of the impact of efforts to raise attainment. Governors are well organised and newly appointed governors are receiving training. They are fully aware they have tended to rely too much on the headteacher and have not provided enough challenge in matters of attainment and progress.

Safeguarding is prioritised and is established in policies, working practices and the ethos of the school. This is endorsed by the high degree of support from parents in the questionnaires returned. The school is vigilant in tackling discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily. The school makes a strong impact on promoting community cohesion locally. It has evaluated its overall provision and correctly identified that global links and pupils' understanding of the different communities in Britain today are not as developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enjoy coming to school and settle quickly because of the close links with parents and the strong care and support they receive. Children's attainment on entry varies but, overall, is a little above the levels typically expected. The stimulating curriculum and good teaching ensure they make good progress. Staff place a strong emphasis on developing children's personal and literacy skills. By the end of Reception their attainment is above average overall, including in literacy. It is above average in most aspects of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy, although more-capable children do not do as well in shape and space as in other aspects. Adults strike a good balance between more formal, adult-led activities and those activities children select for themselves. Activities such as role play or designing and making bags to hold a book enable children to develop their creative and practical skills well. Practical experiences in the school garden, for example, finding out about mini beasts and how plants grow enrich their knowledge and understanding. Such tasks are used well to underpin writing activities. Both indoors and outdoors, children develop their confidence and ability to cooperate through purposeful play. However, the outdoor play area is very small and there are clear plans to extend this and building improvements are due to begin at the end of this term. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good with close and effective teamwork between all staff. Assessment is thorough and careful analysis has led to children's better attainment in numeracy this year. However, there is still work to do to ensure more-capable pupils do as well in shape and space as they do in other aspects.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

Almost half of all parents returned questionnaires. A large majority are pleased with their children's experiences at the school. They feel this is a happy school where their children are kept safe and their children enjoy school. They are very pleased with the way the headteacher is building on the school's strengths and making important

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changes. The majority of parents are pleased with the progress their children are making, but a minority felt their children's progress was inconsistent. Additionally, a few are concerned that pupils do not always behave as well as they should. Inspectors agree with parents' positive comments and find that behaviour is good and well managed. They also find that the school is working hard to ensure children make consistently good progress but acknowledges it has work to do to make sure that the lower attaining and more-capable pupils make consistently good progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Balcombe CofE Controlled Primary 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 58 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 128 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	68	18	32	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	74	11	19	4	7	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	35	60	18	31	4	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	57	19	33	6	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	40	69	14	24	4	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	62	17	29	4	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	69	14	24	4	7	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)	27	47	20	34	5	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	60	17	29	6	10	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	57	17	29	8	14	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	48	25	43	5	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	36	62	17	29	4	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	67	14	24	4	7	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.



17 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Balcombe CofE Controlled Primary School, Balcombe, Haywards Heath, RH17 6HS

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers. You are a credit to yourselves and the school well done! This letter is to tell you what we found out about your school.

The school provides you with a satisfactory education and here are some of the things your school does well.

- You make good progress in Reception.
- You enjoy school and help to make your school a special place because you behave well and are very helpful.
- Your headteacher leads you all well and staff take good care of you and keep you safe.
- You understand how important it is to keep fit and healthy and enjoy sport.
- You have good opportunities for using computers and many interesting learning opportunities through visits, visitors and clubs.

This is what we are asking your school to do to improve:

- help some of you to reach higher standards in English, mathematics and science and all of you to improve your spelling and punctuation
- make all lessons as good as the best ones so that the work is just at the right level and never too easy or hard for you
- ensure teachers in charge of subjects and governors keep a closer check on how well you are doing.

We hope you will continue to enjoy school and you can help by improving your spelling and punctuation and continuing to work hard in all you do. Well done for doing so much for the community. Please keep this up!

Yours sincerely

Eileen Chadwick

Lead inspector

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