

Balfour Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118328
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	358316
Inspection dates	22–23 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Sheila Browning

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	450
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Giles
Headteacher	Ann Bracknell
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2008
School address	Balfour Road Chatham ME4 6QX
Telephone number	01634 843833
Fax number	01634 301070
Email address	Misys001@medway.org.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 1234 234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Twenty-seven lessons, taught by a total of 17 teachers, were observed. Meetings were held with pupils, governors and key staff. Other informal discussions took place with pupils. The school's work was observed and documentation, such as the records held on pupils and the school improvement plan, was scrutinised. Inspectors also looked at 252 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 38 from staff and 100 from pupils.

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

- The school's effectiveness in promoting pupils' writing and mathematical skills particularly in Years 3 and 4.
- The achievement of those more able, to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging.
- The effectiveness of provision, especially teaching, in meeting pupils' individual needs and supporting their progress.
- The extent to which leaders and managers, including the governing body, are sustaining improvements in provision and pupils' outcomes.

Information about the school

This junior school is larger- than- average. A majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Over a quarter of the pupils are from other minority ethnic groups. Of these, the largest groups represented are from Asian and British Pakistani and Black or Black British and African heritage. An increasing number are of Eastern European heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. A number of these pupils have speech and language difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, and moderate learning difficulties. A small but growing proportion of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. A new headteacher was appointed two years ago and a deputy headteacher took up post later in September 2008. Several other members of the senior leadership team have been appointed within the last year.

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

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features. This is due to the strong lead given by the headteacher. She is well supported by senior leaders and the governing body who, with staff, are united in the drive for improvement. Leaders and managers know the school's strengths well and what needs to be tackled. Systems for self-evaluation are good, especially in the way pupils' progress is tracked and analysed to plan for improvement. The recent track record of improvement and rising standards show the school has a good capacity to continue improving. The outstanding care, guidance and support pupils receive are particularly well targeted to the needs of those most vulnerable. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, contributing to high standards of behaviour. It is not surprising that pupils develop good personal skills, show very caring attitudes to each other and feel well-integrated. They have an excellent understanding of healthy living and know how to keep themselves safe. They enjoy a good curriculum. Many participate in mini-youth competitions and music activities successfully.

Pupils' attainment is average at the end of Year 6 but an increasing number attain higher levels. Pupils are making more rapid progress than last year due to the many improvements in the school's provision. They are mostly taught well and enjoy school. One parent comment, typical of many, stated, 'the school really brings out the potential in children...my child enjoys school because the school offers a lot of different activities'. The school has made improvement since the last inspection, when it was judged satisfactory. The good and on occasion outstanding teaching ensures pupils are engaged, motivated and challenged, including those more able. This is because lesson planning has improved and changes to the way writing and mathematical skills are taught are having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Teachers share with pupils what they will be learning and check their success. A good range of assessment strategies, from talk partners to good quality marking and pupils evaluating their own work, help them understand the next steps to work on.

In some lessons, especially in Years 3 and 4, teachers do not always take account of or fully understand the ways pupils with more specific learning needs can learn best. Teaching assistants contribute much to pupils' learning and provide support, but they are not always well deployed and well prepared to contribute more significantly to aid the progress of pupils with specific learning needs.

The school's partnerships with the local community, other schools and organisations and crucially with parents and carers are strengths. Pupils are very aware of their own diverse local community and of different communities abroad through their links, fund raising, performances and visitors. While these links are strong, pupils' awareness of a

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

contrasting community within the United Kingdom is not developed thoroughly enough.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the learning of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, especially in Years 3 and 4, in the coming year by:
 - improving teachers' understanding of the different learning styles and needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - ensuring all additional adults are well prepared and deployed to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Develop the planning and evaluation of the school's community cohesion practices this academic year by:
 - implementing the plans for working with a contrasting community within the United Kingdom.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well. Their attainment rose significantly in 2009, especially in English which was above national comparisons. The latest school results show a significant rise in mathematics and science and at the higher levels for mathematics. Most pupils including those from ethnic minorities, those at early stages of learning English and more able pupils make good progress. All pupils listen well, which enables them to identify quickly the main points they are learning. They develop their vocabulary and sentence construction verbally while preparing to write. Their books show good examples of different forms of writing and their accuracy in spelling and punctuation is increasing as they progress through the school. Pupils' mathematical skills are improved through the many opportunities to work together on problem solving and investigational work. The organisation of pupils of different abilities working together and skilful questioning for individual pupils ensure most of all abilities are equally well challenged. However, there are occasions, and especially in Years 3 and 4, when the particular learning needs of pupils with specific learning needs are not as well catered for in class, individually or in small group work. Learning for pupils of all abilities was particularly impressive in Years 5 and 6 whether writing surreal poems based on another world or investigating scientific processes, such as the water cycle. Pupils used scientific vocabulary enthusiastically to explain evaporation and their eagerness to find out more, such as, 'What is fog? What happens to a puddle?', was infectious. In Year 5, pupils researched and discussed the layered structure of the Amazon rainforest and gave some powerful presentations of their findings.

Pupils have a well-developed sense of spirituality and cultural diversity and talked proudly about the Holocaust memorial event and of the many different languages and cultures they share. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education because the good progress made in their learning is also extended to their personal development. They willingly adopt responsibilities as red caps or school councillors, and

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

keenly embrace the various sporting and cultural activities, for example Bollywood dancing and choir.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' good relationships with their pupils ensure classrooms are happy places for learning. Much of the teaching is good with some that is outstanding, so pupils make effective gains in their learning. Typically, teachers use skilful questioning and good quality marking which encourages pupils to achieve well and clearly points to their next steps in learning. Pupils especially enjoy practical activities, working well on their own and with others. On occasion teachers talk for too long and pupils are not actively learning. The curriculum makes a strong impact on pupils' personal development and well-being and is one of the reasons why children say they enjoy school so much. Many enjoy the excellent range of out-of-school activities and say they like topics, themed weeks, visitors and visits and are looking forward to 'Boot Camp'. Those pupils with particular gifts or talents told inspectors how much they had gained from their art trip. Pupils learning English as an additional language really benefit from the additional

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

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

language support they receive. Pupils develop a reliable set of basic skills, for example Year 5 pupils acquired new mathematical and technological skills when they produced an electronic spreadsheet. Pupils take part in team-building courses and are very competitive.

Care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding with well-targeted support to nurture and help all to make the best of opportunities offered. Pupils are known as individuals, valued and respected. The school's good partnership with parents, carers and others in the local area underpins much of the school's sterling work to be inclusive and ensure pupils' welfare is paramount. Home? school support work with targeted families, transition arrangements with local schools, family social skills workshops and the learning platform are just some of Balfour's strengths in meeting pupils' needs successfully.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Parents and carers say, 'the school has really turned around over the last two years, and this is down to the new leadership team'. A key feature of the success in driving improvement on many fronts is the involvement of staff at all levels. Leaders have a passion for the school, are ambitious and have ensured progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' personal development since the last inspection. This is why pupils make better progress and standards are rising. Staff changes, retraining and new roles are a result of the rigorous and accurate monitoring of provision especially in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. The use of data on pupils' attainment and progress is being embedded to iron out any minor differences in the progress of different groups of pupils and to pinpoint where support or challenge is needed. All are effective in promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. Last year many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities made good progress, but there is more to do to ensure this level of progress continues again.

The governing body is well informed, proactive and challenges the school well. It is linked to year-group leaders and is involved strategically. Good attention is paid by managers at all levels to ensure the safety and care of pupils and rigorous procedures are in place. Risk assessments, clear records and strong collaborative working with other agencies especially for vulnerable pupils are strengths. The school has a good

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

understanding of its own community through its close links with partner schools, places of worship and cultural traditions represented within its minority ethnic families. Links are established with international communities, but links with a contrasting community in the United Kingdom, while planned for, are not sufficiently developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	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	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	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost all were very appreciative of the school's work. How well the school takes account of parent and carers suggestions and concerns was an area of concern for a few. Inspectors found evidence of how the school has responded to parental concerns, but agreed with the school that there is further scope to involve parents and carers in some of the decision-making processes within the school. Parents and carers were highly appreciative of several elements of the school's work, including how safe the school keeps pupils and how much pupils enjoy school. Many positive comments were received about the positive changes brought about in the school by the headteacher over the last two years.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Balfour Junior 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 252 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 450 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	138	55	111	44	0	0	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	133	53	115	46	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	53	21	161	64	26	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	82	33	142	56	14	6	0	1
The teaching is good at this school	91	36	146	58	8	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	70	28	162	64	13	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	76	30	164	65	7	3	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)	71	28	151	60	8	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	71	28	160	63	5	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	69	27	147	58	15	6	2	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	45	18	156	62	19	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	100	40	134	53	6	2	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	115	46	126	50	3	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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.



23 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Balfour Junior School, Chatham, ME4 6QX

Thank you for welcoming us into your school recently. We really enjoyed our time with you. This letter is to tell you what we found out about your school. We agree with you that Balfour is a good school and you do much to make it so. We were really impressed with your brilliant behaviour. You have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. You enjoy each other's company and you care very much about how others feel and have a very good insight into differences in your own and others' cultures. We think you are taught well and make good progress. All the adults in your school make sure you are very well looked after. Your headteacher and all the other people who help run your school do a good job.

Even in a good school some things can be made better. We have asked your teachers to work on these things.

- Help those of you who find learning really hard to have more opportunities to learn in different ways and to make sure that adults that help you understand how they can help you best.
- Make sure the school's plans to work with a school in a different area go ahead so that you have a greater understanding of different peoples in the United Kingdom today.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and by telling teachers how you learn best.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Browning

Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.