

Inspection of Balfour Primary School

Balfour Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 6NE

Inspection dates: 6 to 7 December 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at this inclusive, vibrant school. They demonstrate the school's values of being reflective, respectful, responsible and resilient. Pupils get involved in the life of the school through running clubs at lunchtime, being a play leader or part of the 'pupil parliament'. They approach these roles with energy and enthusiasm. Pupils get along well together. Across the school, there are warm relationships. Adults are readily available to resolve any problems quickly. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Pupils are expected to work hard and they do. They eagerly engage with the learning on offer to them because it is fun and interesting. Pupils behave well. They enjoy working together in pairs and small groups, knowing the importance of being respectful and listening to each other's views. This helps them grow in confidence as they build on each other's ideas and learn together.

Pupils are active citizens who take part in a range of local events. These include 'Young Voices' at the Brighton Centre, 'Let's Dance' at the Brighton Dome and 'Brighton's Children's Parade'. The school offers opportunities that recognise and celebrate pupils' talents and interests. A recently revised nature school provision offers all pupils, starting from early years, time to explore and enjoy their outside environment.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The ambitious curriculum develops pupils' knowledge in logical steps as they move through the school from Reception to Year 6. Pupils benefit from the carefully considered learning that readies them for the next stages of their education. This includes pupils with special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND), who have their individual needs carefully identified. Learning is thoughtfully adapted for these pupils to ensure everyone can learn the same exciting curriculum.

Staff value the high-quality training which supports them in teaching the well-considered curriculum. This is helping them to plan and teach learning that builds on what pupils already know and can do. Leaders know they must continue to provide support for staff as teaching is not yet consistent across the school. Plans are in place to do this to ensure that pupils achieve highly across the full curriculum.

Pupils learn to read quickly and well. Regular phonics sessions, offered right from the start in early years, is a priority. Children delight in demonstrating their phonics skills in reading books that help them practise the sounds they are learning and experience success. Careful and regular assessment means that any pupils who start to find reading more difficult get the help they need.

Pupils enjoy the range of stories and poems which they study. A pupil commented, 'Reading is one of the big parts of our school.' They particularly enjoy being read to. Pupils are inspired to read and have well-informed opinions about the books and

authors that they enjoy. They appreciate the spaces that have been developed to encourage reading, such as the library, which they say encourages them to relax and enjoy a good book.

There is a focus on communication in early years. Staff ensure that children are surrounded by opportunities to absorb and use language. This focus on vocabulary continues across subjects and the school and includes additional support, where necessary, for pupils with SEND. Pupils are articulate and confident. They can clearly explain their thinking and ideas. This supports their learning well.

Pupils know what is expected of their behaviour and conduct. The behaviour policy outlines this clearly to help staff apply the expected rules and routines consistently. Pupils are well motivated both by the rewards they are given and also because being kind and respectful is the norm. Pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour are given the support they need to be successful and are well integrated into school life. Pupils attend school well. The school has high expectations of attendance, which is monitored and supported appropriately.

Pupils have a deep understanding of equality and diversity. They say that 'respecting difference means a lot in this school'. Pupils speak positively about the well-being support they receive from adults in the school. They describe how they can spend time with trusted adults to talk about their emotions. They say this 'makes a big difference'.

Governors have the knowledge and expertise they need to provide support to the school. They share the ambition of school leaders to strive for the very best for all pupils. They have a sharp focus on ensuring that disadvantaged pupils are fully included and that they get the help they need to achieve well.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They highly value the way they are supported when their children start school. They describe the school as kind and say that their children are happy. A parent summed up the views of many in describing it as 'A fantastic school where my children are thriving!'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, the choice of lesson activity does not always match what pupils already know and can do. When this happens, pupils do not learn as much as they could. The school should continue to provide the training and support required to help pupils achieve highly across the full curriculum.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil [premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	114382
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10287855
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	675
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kirstin Baker
Headteacher	Alan Gunn
Website	www.balfourprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2022.
- The school currently uses three unregistered alternative providers to support a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with school leaders. The lead inspector also met with the representatives of the governing body and held a separate meeting with representative from the local authority.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, computing, art and design and science. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils read.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff surveys. Inspectors spoke to parents at the school gates.
- The inspectors talked to staff to gather their views about the school, including their workload and well-being. The inspectors met with several groups of pupils, as well as speaking to pupils during lessons, playtimes and at lunchtime.

Inspection team

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Rivers	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Hogarth	Ofsted Inspector
Harry Ingham	His Majesty's Inspector

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