

Inspection of Balfour Primary School

Balfour Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 6NE

Inspection dates: 11–12 February 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school, where they are well cared for. Pupils feel safe at school and say that bullying does not often happen. When it does, staff deal with it quickly. Pupils respect each other and have positive attitudes to learning. They are strongly encouraged to get involved in after-school clubs, such as the gardening club, which gives its produce to be used in the school kitchen. Pupils are also encouraged to lead clubs and activities. Pupils have their own school parliament sessions and know they can make a difference to what happens in school.

Pupils' learning is often linked to the local area's history and culture. For example, pupils in Year 3 learn about famous Brighton residents such as George IV, Dr Richard Russell and Martha Gunn as part of their 'Beside the Sea' topic.

However, leaders and teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can learn in all curriculum subjects. Not all of the subjects that pupils learn are well planned. Pupils do not always know and remember the knowledge and skills they have been taught. This is because work is not matched well enough to what pupils already know and need to learn next.

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

Many leaders are new to the school or to their roles. They have a strong desire for all pupils to do well. Their work is not yet having as much impact on the quality of education as it needs to. They have ensured that there is a clear, structured curriculum in place in mathematics and writing. Staff know what they need to teach in these two subjects in each year group. As a result, pupils achieve well in mathematics and writing.

The curriculum is not as strong overall, however, as it is in these two subjects. Leaders have not identified the key knowledge and skills pupils need to know in each year group across all subjects. They do not keep a close enough check on how well newly implemented curriculum plans are being used by teachers. For example, pupils in a Year 5 science lesson were learning about habitats but this did not appear on the planning provided by leaders. In this case, leaders did not know whether old or new plans were being used. Teachers do not always plan activities to match pupils' needs. Consequently, too often pupils do not remember the knowledge and skills they are taught well enough in science, music and geography. Teachers sometimes set work that is too easy for the most able pupils and too hard for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Recently, leaders have improved their understanding of what support pupils with SEND require to achieve well across the curriculum. They share this information with teachers appropriately. However, some teachers do not use this information well enough. As a result, some pupils with SEND are not achieving as well as they could.

Leaders ensure that staff focus on teaching reading as soon as children start school. Teachers are clear about which sounds and words children should be able to read by the end of each term. In the Reception classes, children who struggle or lack confidence receive effective help, so that they are not left behind. In key stage 1, however, books are not always matched carefully to the abilities of individual pupils, particularly for those who are falling behind and for pupils with SEND. In key stage 2, most pupils enjoy reading but older pupils are not challenged to read a wide enough range of different types of books.

Leaders promote pupils' personal development effectively. Pupils learn how to share their ideas and feelings with confidence. Voting for their classmates to represent them in the school's pupil parliament gives pupils an insight into how democracy works. Pupils learn about the different religions and cultures that exist within and beyond their own locality. Pupils understand the importance of tolerance and clearly respect others' differences.

Children get off to a good start to their education in the early years. They develop quickly into confident, independent learners. Children develop good learning habits and respond well to knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff. They are happy and safe in school and most parents agree. Phonics and early reading have a high priority and staff use every opportunity to develop children's reading skills and mathematical knowledge and understanding. Consequently, children read well in the early years. They recognise the numbers they have been taught and know how to solve simple mathematical tasks.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed a culture where all staff receive regular training on safeguarding matters. Staff know pupils well and take their welfare and safety seriously. Consequently, all staff know what to do if they have any concerns over a pupil's safety or well-being. Leaders ensure timely referral to other agencies. They ensure that effective support is provided for vulnerable pupils and their families.

Teachers help pupils to look after themselves by sensitively making them aware of risks, both online and in the community. Leaders and governors ensure that appropriate checks are made on staff prior to employment at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There have been many changes to senior leadership over the past two years. A wealth of new systems and processes have been introduced but not monitored and followed up to assess the impact on pupils' learning. This means that leaders do not have a secure understanding of the impact of their work. In recent months, under a new headteacher, there is a clearer strategic vision for the

school. Leaders now need to make sure that they have a more accurate understanding of the impact of their work. This is so that they can fully judge the quality of education at the school and target their actions effectively.

- There are significant variations in how the curriculum is planned and delivered across the different subjects in key stages 1 and 2, particularly in science, geography and music. Consequently, pupils' learning does not always build on the knowledge they have previously gained. Leaders need to ensure that all subject planning is improved so plans better identify and sequence the key components of knowledge that pupils need to know in key stages 1 and 2.
- Many teachers do not have a good enough understanding of how well pupils with SEND are learning in subjects other than English and mathematics. As a result, the work that teachers set is not sequenced well enough to build on what pupils with SEND know. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum across all subjects is better planned to meet the needs of all pupils with SEND so that pupils with SEND know more and remember more of the subjects they study.
- The reading curriculum has recently been strengthened. Pupils enjoy some engaging extra-curricular activities in reading but there are areas of weakness across the reading provision. Key stage 2 pupils do not read widely enough and are not developing sufficient knowledge of a range of genres such as plays, poetry and historical literature. Leaders have not ensured that books are matched well enough to support pupils who have fallen behind in their reading in key stage 1. Leaders need to ensure that the reading curriculum is better planned to develop all pupils' reading knowledge and skills even further.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	114382
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10111408
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	788
Appropriate authority	governing body
Chair of governing body	Shelley Baker
Headteacher	Simon Davies
Website	www.balfourprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 November 2017

Information about this school

- Many senior and middle leaders have been appointed to their posts since the last inspection. The headteacher started in November 2019, after a period of two years where the school had not had a substantive headteacher. Many of the school's governors are also new to post.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team, including the special education needs and inclusion coordinator and subject leaders. I also met with members of the local governing body and representatives from the local authority.
- We met with teachers and non-teaching staff and spoke to pupils. We observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and listened to their views on behaviour and bullying.

- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, writing, science, music and geography. We carried out lesson visits to see these subjects being taught and looked at pupils' work. We spoke to teachers who taught these subjects and held discussions with subject leaders.
- We reviewed safeguarding arrangements by reviewing safeguarding records, talking to staff and pupils about how they keep safe and checking the school's single central record of pre-employment checks. We met with the school's designated safeguarding lead and attendance officer.
- We considered 23 responses to Ofsted's staff survey, 201 responses from parents on Ofsted's Parent View survey and the associated free-text comments.

Inspection team

Clare Morgan, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Debra Anderson	Ofsted Inspector
Jon Hills	Ofsted Inspector
Liz McIntosh	Ofsted Inspector

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