

Inspection of Balliol Primary School

Balliol Road, Kempston, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK42 7ER

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 July 2022

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	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Balliol Primary School are friendly and kind. They show their good manners right from the start of the day as they politely help themselves to the bagels leaders serve at the gate.

Pupils recall much of what they learn. They say teachers explain concepts clearly, so pupils know how to complete their work. If pupils make mistakes, they correct them using teachers' feedback.

Pupils take part in memorable experiences. To name but a few, they pet farm animals, watch and listen to an orchestra, and meet an arctic explorer. Pupils make links between these experiences and what they learn in class. They look forward to leaders reintroducing after-school clubs in September, so they can strengthen their sporting prowess or demonstrate their creativity through performing arts.

The behaviour system motivates pupils. For example, exchanging online points for books, stationery and other rewards helps older pupils learn the value of hard work. Pupils learn about bullying. This helps them to report it when it occurs. Pupils know that staff will support them to stop it happening again. As a result, pupils feel safe in their school.

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

Pupils get off to a strong start learning to read in the early years. Carefully planned activities mean that most children in Reception recognise sounds in the words they read. Pupils build on this knowledge in Year 1, for example by learning that '-ed' endings have different pronunciations, such as 'walked', 'enjoyed' and 'needed'. Pupils regularly read suitably challenging books. Reading regularly means they could win a 'golden coin' to use in the school's book vending machine. Much of the support for weaker readers works well. However, some of these pupils read very slowly. It makes it hard for them to understand what they read. Some staff providing support do not know strategies that will help the pupils to read more fluently.

The curriculum is well designed from the pre-school to Year 6. Leaders have carefully selected curriculum packages that support teachers' workload. As a result, teachers focus on adapting tasks, allowing pupils to learn the intended knowledge. Teachers check on pupils' knowledge during and after lessons. For example, pupils use a 'double-page spread' to display the concepts and vocabulary they have learned. Teachers then check what pupils have remembered and use this to inform teaching.

Provision for children in the pre-school, Nursery and Reception years works well. Staff are quick to build supportive relationships with children and their parents. Most children present as keen learners, joining in with discussions and songs. Staff build children's language carefully, using words linked to what children must learn. For

example, introducing the mathematics word 'segment' while children tasted different fruits to learn about healthy eating. Currently, the outdoor area for the Reception classes does not match the ambitious activities and high-quality resources on offer in the classrooms. Leaders have plans to address this, but they are not yet complete.

Staff follow the clear processes for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders guide staff to set focused targets and arrange fitting additional help. Teachers capture evidence of pupils' progress well, helping pupils and their parents see that the support is working.

Staff call upon leaders' training to manage pupils' behaviour effectively. Most pupils concentrate in lessons, discussing their learning with a peer and following adults' instructions. Leaders' analysis of behavioural incidents allows them to offer support to teachers. Teachers value this support, such as help producing a 'social story' to address behavioural concerns. It has all contributed to suspensions reducing over time.

The personal development programme is suitably wide ranging. Leaders introduced a clearly sequenced personal, social and health education curriculum. For example, the theme of friendship starts with children in the early years learning how to make friends. It ends in Year 6 with pupils understanding how their words and actions have consequences. Pupils vote for peers to take on different leadership roles, such as the head boy and head girl, who help leaders interview potential new staff.

Leaders, including governors, oversee a supportive work culture. Governors, leaders and staff confidently seek advice to strengthen their practice. Approaches like the 'well-being wheel', where the winners delegate a task, facilitate teamwork. However, governors and school leaders lack some strategic oversight. For example, they recognise that persistent absenteeism is higher than they would like, but their tiered system for addressing attendance concerns is not timely. As such, it is not resolving the issue. This is true of a few other school systems.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff oversee careful checks on adults working or volunteering in the school. Leaders and staff recognise the importance of maintaining positive relationships with pupils and their families. It encourages vulnerable pupils and their parents to seek support when they need it. Staff call upon training to recognise and report concerns. Leaders appreciate that without liaising promptly with external agencies, the right support may not be put in place. Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to keep safe. They share examples of how to use the internet safely, such as keeping personal information private.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The additional support for weaker readers helps them learn the sounds they have yet to grasp. However, some staff leading this support are not as skilled in the delivery of teaching reading strategies for fluency and/or comprehension as they ought to be. As a result, some pupils are not developing these key skills. Leaders need to ensure all staff are suitably skilled to be able to strengthen all aspects of pupils' reading.
- The activities organised in the outdoor area for children in the Reception Year do not match the ambition of those arranged in the classroom. As a result, children are not provided with as many opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills, using high-quality resources, outside as they are inside. Leaders need to ensure that staff have the training and support required to address this.
- Leaders have improved most aspects of the school, particularly with the curriculum. However, how they evaluate some systems lacks rigour. This means some systems, such as those for monitoring attendance, do not work as well as leaders intend. Governors and school leaders must work together to check systems work well and, where they do not, leaders must make timely changes and check these closely for impact.

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.

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	109464
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10227086
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	422
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Roger Stokes
Headteacher	Louise Youngman
Website	www.balliolschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Balliol Primary School opened in September 2017. When its predecessor school, Balliol Lower School, was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2017, it was judged to remain good overall.
- The school provides pre-school and nursery provision for children aged two to four years.
- The school has before- and after-school provision run by a separately registered and inspected childcare provider.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, four assistant headteachers, five governors, and a representative working on behalf of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, geography and music.
- For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leads, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and some support staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of other school documentation and policies, including records of meetings.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector spoke to the designated safeguarding lead and two deputy designated safeguarding leads. The lead inspector viewed records relating to safeguarding and reviewed the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. Inspectors also spoke with teachers, support staff and pupils.
- Inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors gathered parents' views by reviewing the 24 responses and 15 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Two inspectors also spoke to several parents at the start of a school day.
- Inspectors gathered staff members' views by speaking to several of them. Inspectors also took account of the 32 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Daniel Short, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie Harrison

Ofsted Inspector

Lesley Stevens

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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