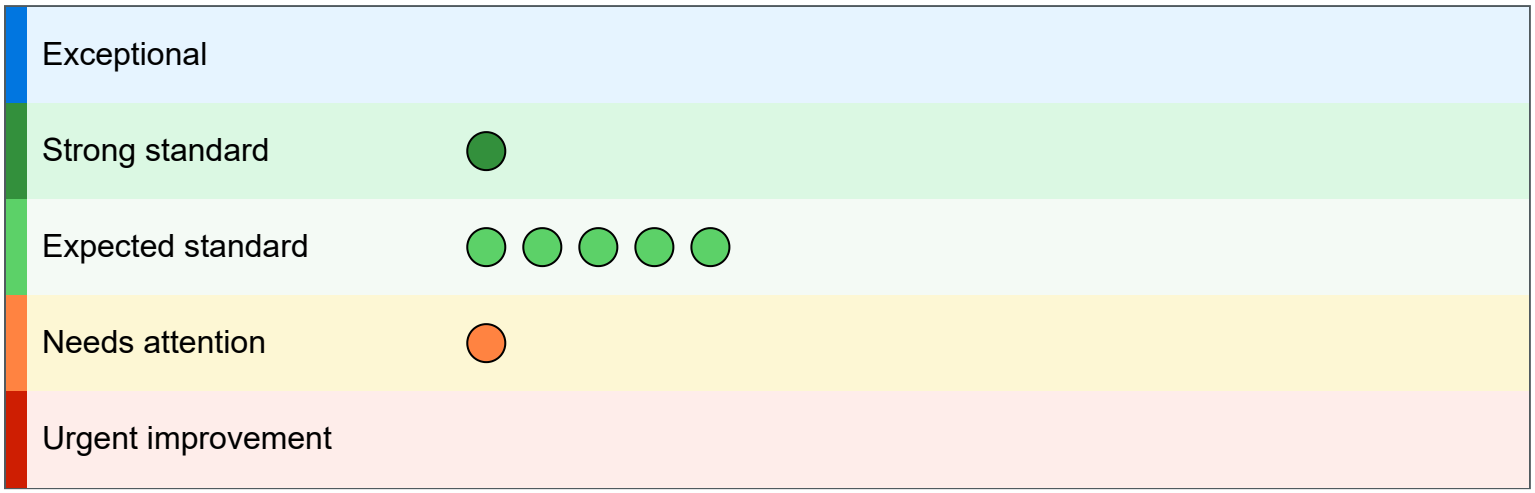
Balliol Primary School

Address: Balliol Road, Kempston, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK42 7ER

Unique reference number (URN): 109464

Inspection report: 13 October 2026



Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard

Leaders are unwavering and tenacious in their focus on attendance. They analyse pupils' attendance in great detail. This means they spot almost immediately any dips in attendance and take swift, bespoke action. As a result, few pupils become persistent absentees. If they do, then it is not long before attendance improves again. Several pupils with low attendance soon improve or even attend every day. Attendance is especially high for pupils in receipt of pupil premium or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Attendance overall is now higher than it ever was pre-COVID and is being sustained at this higher level over time.

Pupils behave very well. They are polite, focus well in lessons and want to do well. Pupils are motivated by the engaging and attractive wider opportunities they are all encouraged to take part in. Leaders and staff consistently apply the behaviour policy. Pupils conform to what is expected of them. Many pupils have speech and language needs. Staff are especially skilled at dealing well with pupils' emotions and helping them to manage their communication needs. Therefore, pupils soon settle and learn strategies to manage their feelings. Disruption, suspensions and bullying are rare. All pupils learn harmoniously together in class.

Expected standard

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders ensure staff know the curriculum content well and the order in which to teach it. Staff use checks on learning to identify accurately pupils with important gaps in their reading, writing and mathematical knowledge. There is a substantial focus on ensuring pupils acquire the key building blocks of knowledge, such as decoding words, letter formation and knowing number facts. Staff have benefited from additional training to effectively support the pupils who need to catch up.

Leaders ensure that pupils are taught a broad range of subjects. Pupils enjoy the variety of learning they gain in art, music and French, for example. Leaders ensure other learning experiences complement pupils' recall of key knowledge, such as through trips, having visitors in school or themed days.

Typically, staff make appropriate and general adaptations to lessons to ensure pupils access the work set, especially for the significant number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are times, however, when adaptations are not precisely matched to all pupils' specific needs or capabilities. Equally, there are occasions when staff teach content without the depth or ambition needed to ensure pupils always secure age-related expectations.

Early years

Expected standard

Leaders have made sure that children's knowledge builds systematically across all areas of learning over time from nursery to the end of the Reception class. They have also ensured care practices meet statutory guidance. Children are happy and safe. Generally, the curriculum is taught well across the early years. Teaching is effective in the Reception class as the planned activities are very well matched to specific pupils' needs and based on thorough checks on children's understanding. Staff are quick to enhance opportunities to extend learning further, for example in relation to developing pencil grip or knowledge of number. Staff give a high priority to children learning to read, having stories read to them and retelling favourite stories.

Staff ensure that daily routines and interactions in the Reception class support language development. However, opportunities for children to use the vocabulary they have learned are not consistently maximised across the early years as a whole.

Leaders have taken effective action to improve the outdoor learning environment. This means children engage in meaningful learning opportunities to support their physical development and spatial awareness.

Children achieve well in early years and leave Reception class very well prepared for Year 1. This includes children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who are disadvantaged. Any important gaps in knowledge are swiftly identified and quickly addressed.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders are swift to identify pupils with additional needs and put in effective support at an early stage. Leaders provide their most vulnerable pupils, including those known to social care or young carers, with appropriate additional pastoral care and/or therapeutic programmes, such as music and play therapy. Leaders ensure the pupils have precise support for their mental wellbeing needs and establish high attendance habits.

The school has a significant number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) for speech, language and communication. It typically manages these needs well. The pupils access regular speech and language support. Staff action any recommendations from external agencies. They make sure the pupils have the necessary resources they need in lessons to access the learning.

Pupils with SEND have support plans in place with specific academic and/or social targets. Staff review these regularly. Overall, these pupils overcome their barriers to learning, especially relating to improving their attendance and behaviour. However, for a few pupils with SEND, there are too many targets set. This hinders how well their academic needs are prioritised or overcome securely.

Leaders have a clear strategy in place to address the needs of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. This has had most impact on reducing absence for this group. It has also improved their participation in the wider opportunities on offer.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

The school is well led and managed. Leaders have succeeded in creating a respectful, united and thriving school community. Leaders go out of their way to engage successfully with families. They give a high priority to pastoral care and opportunities for all. This vision is also shared by staff, who enjoy working here. Staff appreciate the professional development, training and support they receive. Leaders empower staff to be proactive in seeking these opportunities and additional qualifications. Teachers new to the profession are well supported.

Leaders and governors have demonstrated a positive impact on improving and sustaining high attendance and ensuring impressive standards of behaviour. Pupils' attainment outcomes at the end of Year 6 are now starting to improve. Leaders rightly recognise this is an area for continued focus.

Governors play their part well in holding leaders to account, not only for achievement outcomes, but for safeguarding, pupil attendance and staff wellbeing. Leaders and governors ensure there is external challenge through their engagement with the local authority.

Leaders and governors know the school in detail. They know the strengths and the next areas that need strengthening. However, the school improvement priorities are often too broad and not precisely measurable. This hinders leaders' and governors' strategic oversight of some aspects of the school's work, including pupils' achievement. Sometimes, the assessment of the impact of leaders' actions could be better.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders give a lot of thought to ensuring pupils access opportunities that they may not otherwise get to do. They target their personal development programme through the accurate identification of pupils' needs or gaps in what pupils may have experienced before. For example, pupils who may not know how to make healthy food choices benefit from learning how to cook themselves a healthy meal. Those pupils with an interest in music have the chance to be in a band, while others improve their confidence by performing on a stage. Leaders seek experiences that appeal to pupils' talents and interests. There is a high level of take-up of school clubs by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils eligible for the pupil premium. In addition, leaders place a significant emphasis on providing bespoke mental wellbeing support. This is, for example, through art or music therapy, access to counselling or family support.

Overall, pupils understand why discrimination is wrong and the importance of equality. They learn about understanding why some people may behave differently and how to help them. They know why having a fair voting system is a key aspect of democracy. They experience this for themselves in school elections. Pupils are taught about safe and healthy relationships and how to stay safe online. Pupils are developing an emerging awareness of cultural and religious diversity. Staff ensure pupils are taught the statutory requirements of relationships and health education appropriate for their age. Older pupils understand about puberty, for example.

Leaders have put in place an appropriate personal, health, social and economic curriculum. Overall, this is taught well. However, some pupils are less secure in how well they can recall key important learning from these lessons. This is especially the case for some pupils with SEND.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

Leaders recognise that pupil outcomes by the end of Year 6 are still not as high as they could be. This is true for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or those eligible for pupil premium funding. There have been some recent improvements in all pupils' achievement in national assessments at the end of key stage 2. However, this upward trend is still at an early stage.

Leaders' actions have ensured that pupils are catching up quickly on important gaps in reading, writing and mathematics. This is seen in pupils performing well in the Year 1 phonics and the Year 4 multiplication times table checks, for example. However, pupils are less secure in applying this knowledge in areas such as reading comprehension or problem solving in mathematics.

Generally, pupils with SEND progress suitably over time. However, a small but significant group of pupils with SEND have too many targets to focus on at once. This hinders how well they achieve, because there is a lack of clarity as to which targets are the most important to tackle first.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils happily attend this school, secure in the knowledge they are well cared for. From nursery upwards, pupils benefit from how quickly and well all staff get to know them and their families. Pupils' sense of belonging to their school community is palpable. It results in them showing high levels of respect for each other and adults. The school is a calm, positive and safe place for all pupils. Incidents of any unwelcome behaviour are rare. Pupils consistently follow the school's high expectations for behaviour, including at breaktimes.

Pupils like and trust the adults. They enjoy their lessons. Children in early years, especially in the Reception Year, make an excellent start. Pupils across the school benefit from the work to improve their reading, handwriting and times-table knowledge. Achievement in national tests at the end of Year 6 is improving. However, there is still work to do to ensure more pupils achieve at least in line with the national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics before they start secondary school.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or who are eligible for pupil premium funding have their needs quickly identified. Timely support is put in place for them in lessons and through tailored interventions. In general, most pupils with SEND achieve

well from their various starting points. However, some pupils with SEND have too many targets set at once. Consequently, the targets are not easy to prioritise.

Attendance is high. Pupils want to be here as they love the exciting and varied wider opportunities on offer. Pupils of all backgrounds and needs take part in these. Pupils are enthusiastic about, for example, their ambitious musical theatre productions, coding projects for the international space station, cooking clubs, art projects, museum visits and taking part in a rock band. Many pupils hold leadership roles. These help to improve pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure staff sharpen adaptations, reduce the number of targets for some pupils and raise expectations within lessons so that work set is more precisely aligned to pupils' needs and capabilities, including for some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so they achieve well.
- Leaders and governors should ensure that school improvement priorities are refined to be more specific and clearly measurable in order to strengthen strategic oversight and analysis of how well pupils achieve.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Sam Lock.

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

This inspection took place on 13 and 14 October 2026.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteachers during the inspection. This included the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors also spoke to a range of staff, pupils and parents. The lead inspector met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing board. The lead inspector also spoke to the school improvement partner from the local authority.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The school also, under the same registration, runs nursery provision for 2- to 4-year-old children.

Headteacher: Louise Youngman

Lead inspector:
Sara Boyce, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Judith Sumner, Ofsted Inspector
Michele Geddes, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from different sources. More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 13 October 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

355
Above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 268

School capacity

440
Above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

33.45%
Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 26.5%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.25%
Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 4.1%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

19.72%
Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	39%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	52%	61%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	57%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	65%	74%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	63%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	58%	72%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	49%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	67%	73%	Close to average

The Key Stage 2 data we used for this inspection has not yet been published; therefore, we have not provided it alongside this school's report card. ‘R’ in the table indicates that the data is not yet available. We will update the table when the Department for Education publishes the data for the latest academic year.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	16%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	27%	46%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	37%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	40%	62%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	58%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	40%	58%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	32%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	40%	59%	Below

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Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	16%	69%	-53 pp
2023/24 (final)	27%	67%	-41 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	37%	81%	-44 pp
2023/24 (final)	40%	80%	-40 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	58%	78%	-20 pp
2023/24 (final)	40%	78%	-38 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	32%	81%	-49 pp
2023/24 (final)	40%	79%	-39 pp

The Key Stage 2 data we used for this inspection has not yet been published; therefore, we have not provided it alongside this school's report card. ‘R’ in the table indicates that the data is not yet available. We will update the table when the Department for Education publishes the data for the latest academic year.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2025/26 (1 term)	4.6%	5.1%	Close to average
2024/25 (3 term)	4.7%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	4.4%	5.5%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2025/26 (1 term)	15.2%	14.4%	Close to average
2024/25 (3 term)	9.8%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.0%	14.6%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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