

Balcombe CofE Primary School

London Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 6HS

Inspection dates 13–14 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils achieve well across the school. They make good progress in reading and writing and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers as a result of the well-tailored support and help they receive.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because staff provide a stimulating and nurturing environment.
- Pupils enjoy school and behave well. They are polite and well mannered and talk enthusiastically and confidently about their learning. There is effective provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively to support pupils' learning.
- The headteacher, very effectively supported by the new leadership team and improved governing body, has created a positive climate for learning. There is a strong staff team. All want to give the pupils the best possible education.
- School leaders and governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and what needs to be improved further. They have successfully addressed issues from the last inspection, improving pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and leadership and management, demonstrating that they have capacity to improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not make as much progress in mathematics as they do in reading and writing.
- Pupils' mathematical skills in problem solving are not as good as they could be and this hinders the levels they reach.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons. All were jointly observed by the headteacher.
- The inspector carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work with both the headteacher and senior staff.
- Pupils throughout the school were heard to read.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, representatives of the governing body, with the school's middle and senior leaders and with a representative from the local authority to discuss the range and impact of support provided for the school.
- The inspector took account of the 97 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, the views of 13 parents and carers who spoke to the inspector during the inspection and those who completed the school's most recent parent survey. She also looked at the 17 questionnaires returned by staff.
- The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's information on pupils' progress for the current school year, and previous three years, and notes of visits made by the school improvement adviser. She also looked at self-evaluation and school improvement documentation, planning, assessment information, documentation on the management of teachers' performance and school policies and records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance. The school's safeguarding procedures were also evaluated.
- On the second morning of the inspection, all infant classes including the Early Years Foundation Stage were involved in a Christmas Nativity performance and therefore not participating in their normal class-based timetable.

Inspection team

Wendy Forbes, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Balcombe is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- Pupils are taught in mixed-aged classes.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A well below average proportion of pupils is eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school has recently experienced a number of changes in its staffing organisation, including the development in the past year of a newly-formed leadership team to include two senior members of staff with part-time responsibilities as assistant headteachers. A full-time temporary member of staff is covering the planned absence of a teacher in Years 4/5 for the current academic year.
- A new library was opened in January 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' standards in mathematics so that they are consistently good across the school and pupils make good or better progress by:
 - ensuring pupils have more opportunities in lessons to practise and extend their knowledge and understanding of basic skills in mathematics so that they can use these skills to solve problems
 - ensuring that teachers provide mathematical activities that accurately match pupils' different abilities and provide just the right level of challenge.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children join Reception with skills and abilities typical for their age. They make a great start, thriving in a stimulating, nurturing environment. They progress well in the three prime areas of communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development. Children enjoy their learning. Enthralled by the transformation of their previously watery, now frozen, 'dinosaur world', they excitedly investigated what changes had occurred. As one child exclaimed, 'It's magic what happens in our classroom.' Progress in learning letters and sounds is good. Many already read and write simple words and sentences, count accurately to 10, and often beyond, and are able to choose different activities independently.
- Pupils in the rest of the school achieve well. In Years 1 to 6 pupils build successfully on their early reading skills and make at least good progress in reading. They effectively use a range of skills, including sounding out letters to read unfamiliar words. Investment in a new library has heightened the focus on reading.
- The successful drive to improve writing skills since the last inspection has accelerated pupils' progress in writing. Year 2 literacy work shows that pupils write consistently above average for their age. In a Year 5/6 literacy lesson pupils successfully developed their punctuation, grammar and dramatic descriptive writing skills as they created the middle section of a story set in the Second World War. All this means that, by the end of Year 6, standards in reading and writing are above average.
- In mathematics, staff have worked hard since the last inspection to successfully improve mental calculation skills, which are now good. Pupils have, however, fewer opportunities to extend their basic mathematical skills to solve real-life problems. As a result, they make slower progress in mathematics and reach standards that are broadly average, but rapidly improving.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar rates of progress to other pupils, demonstrating the school's effective focus on promoting equality of opportunity. This is because they receive well-targeted support from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium make good progress and benefit from a wide range of support including developing their communication and literacy skills. As a result, gaps have closed between their attainment and that of other pupils.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is consistently good, enthusiastic and promotes pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Teachers and teaching assistants are highly skilled in the teaching of letters and sounds in Reception and Key Stage 1. By the time pupils are in Key Stage 2 they are confident readers and here they benefit from the good teaching of guided reading.
- Senior leaders have strengthened the management of teachers' performance very effectively to improve teaching so that it is consistently good across the school. Most parents, carers and pupils agree that teaching is typically good.
- Teaching in the mixed-age Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 class is a strength of the school. Planning is good and gives children a good balance of activities that they can select for themselves and those that are directed by adults. This promotes confidence in learning well.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. The improved use of assessment information to plan lessons enables pupils to build on what they already know and can do. This helps them to make good progress. Activities are generally matched appropriately to pupils' learning needs. However, there are a few occasions when some activities do not challenge pupils

enough when developing mathematical skills to solve problems or calculations.

- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and they are consistent in letting pupils know how well they are learning and, in most cases, how they can improve their work.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well. In one lesson a teaching assistant helped a pupil to carefully sound out letters to help them to read.
- Teaching makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, especially during times given to reflect on their learning and through setting high expectations for behaviour.
- Inspection findings support the positive view of most parents and carers that their children are well taught.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

is good

- Pupils enjoy school, behave well and say they feel safe. They are polite and friendly to visitors and treat each other and adults with respect. Pupils exhibit exemplary manners, politeness and courtesy.
- There is a calm orderly atmosphere around the school. Pupils feel confident in the adults around them and that there is always an adult they can go to if they are worried about anything.
- Pupils say that lessons are hardly ever disrupted by any poor behaviour. Very occasionally, when the pace in lesson slows, a few pupils become fidgety and start to chat among themselves.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They are very well aware of the different forms of bullying, such as name calling and internet bullying, and say that bullying of any sort is rare and always dealt with effectively by staff.
- The school council plays an active role in the school. For example, it helps to improve pupils' experiences at school, such as through providing more equipment at playtimes. In addition, it works hard at fundraising for charitable events such as Children in Need. Year 5 and Year 6 pupils perform their duties conscientiously as prefects, team point monitors, technical assistants and as librarians. In their role as playground buddies Year 4 and Year 5 pupils support younger pupils well, for example in teaching them how to play games.
- Most parents and carers who expressed a view feel that behaviour is typically good and that their children are safe. A small minority of parents and carers who responded to the on-line Parent View survey disagreed that the school made sure that pupils are well behaved. However, behaviour observed through the inspection and the views of parents and carers who spoke to the inspector confirmed that behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is typically good and sometimes outstanding.

The leadership and management

is good

- Leadership and management have strengthened since the last inspection. The headteacher, supported well by a very effective governing body and the recently appointed assistant headteachers, has made every effort to ensure that all pupils make the best possible progress. As a result, although some inconsistencies remain in how effectively mathematics is taught, the gap between pupils' achievement in mathematics and reading and writing is closing rapidly. Equal opportunities is a priority. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated.
- Senior leaders make frequent checks on pupils' progress, including meetings with individual teachers to review the performance of their class and ways of seeking improvement. Where any pupils are identified at risk of falling behind appropriate support is put into place.
- Systems to manage the performance of staff are securely in place. This has led to improvement, particularly in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Targets set for teachers link closely to the school's priorities for improvement and appropriate support and

training is in place to help them improve their skills.

- Strong teamwork and a determination to bring about improvement have strengthened the school's overall effectiveness. Self-evaluation is accurate and priorities for improvement link closely to raising further pupils' achievement.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. It is stimulating and enthuses pupils in their learning. As a result, behaviour in lessons is good.
- The curriculum makes interesting links between subjects, as seen in the history subject links to mathematics. Pupils enjoy taking part in many clubs, school performances and in out-of-school activities, including sport, music and the arts. Mathematics remains an area of the curriculum the school is focused on developing in order that pupils' achievement matches achievement in English.
- Effective use has been made of the school's pupil premium funding. This results in targeted pupils catching up rapidly in their learning and achieving as well as pupils who do not get this additional resource.
- The local authority provides good, effective support to the school. This has helped to strengthen teaching and governance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - As a result of training and development, the governing body has improved. Governors undertake training that provides them with the skills to analyse how well the school is doing and to compare its performance with other schools both locally and nationally. They provide good, very effective support and challenge for the school and have a clear view of what it needs to do to improve further. Governors have a detailed understanding of how the pupil premium funding is spent and how it improves the progress of this group. They talk confidently and accurately about the quality of teaching. They ensure that systems to check performance of teachers are robust and they understand the link between performance and teachers' salary progression. Safeguarding is given high priority by governors. They ensure that the school complies with all requirements for safeguarding including meticulous pre-employment checks.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	126006
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	402370

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	148
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeff Thompson
Headteacher	Wendy Littlefair
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 June 2010
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